

ALARUMS and EXCURSIONS

102

February



ALBUMS AND EXCURSIONS

February

1905



This fanzine is set up as a monthly discussion apa (amateur press association) for SF fans and others interested in role-playing sf/fantasy games. It should give us all a chance to discuss rules and share our own special ideas, and to write up expeditions we've been on. The opinions expressed in it are solely those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the editor.

1. If you have a contribution for A&E:
 - a. Type it up on a 9"-wide stencil (In America, NINE-hole) and mail to LEE GOLD, 3965 Alla Rd., Los Angeles, CA 90066. Include \$1/stencil. Or use an 8.5"-wide stencil (In America, FOUR-hole) and include \$1.50/stencil. Type 7" horizontally (centered), lines 5-64 vertically.
 - b. Print it yourself; copy count is 500. \$10 handling charge for bulky inclusions. Do not use the word "advertisement" to describe the contribution.
 - c. Send it to Lee Gold, and she will stencil and mimeo it at \$2/page (or fraction of a page). Typing automatically includes improving spelling and grammar (and may include a few new typos). It may also include editorial comments. Those who want their deathless prose left intact should type it themselves or ask for it to be photostenciled at \$2.65/page (or fraction).
UNPAID FOR MATERIAL WILL NOT BE MIMEOED NOR INCLUDED IN A&E.
2. The fanzine will cost as follows:
 - a. Non-contributors: POSTAGE PLUS
 - 1) \$1.50, if you contributed to neither the current nor previous issues.
 - 2) Nothing...if you contributed to the previous issue.
 - b. Contributors: Free, no charge for postage. US (non-APO/FPO) sent UPS; extra for First Class; Canada/APO/FPO sent First Class. Other countries sent Air Mail/Printed Matter.
 - c. For trade with other F&SF Gaming fanzines only; mailed BOOK rate.
 - d. No fixed cost subscriptions are possible, since postage rates and contribution credit may vary. But you may send a check or cash (US or foreign currency) to Lee Gold, and she will deduct costs and inform you each issue how much money is left. When there is no longer enough money to send A&E, she will so inform you--and at your specific request return the balance of your account to you.
 - e. Buyers at stores: pay the store whatever it charges.
3. Back issues: check the Table of Contents page for available back issues.
Cost is \$1.50 plus postage.

POSTAGE: please indicate your choice of mailing options.

US (non APO/FPO): First Class (\$2.58, 4 days); UPS (\$1.59, 1 week); or Book (63¢, 3 weeks). FPO/APO: only First Class and Book options are available. UPS cannot be sent directly to a PO Box.

CANADA: First Class as above--or Book at 83¢.

OTHER COUNTRIES: Book (83¢, 2-3 months) or Air Mail/Printed Matter (3 weeks; Britain/Europe--\$3.98, Australia--\$5.38).

If no money is available for the type of postage requested, it will be sent as efficiently as possible. Mailing two issues at once costs much less than twice the cost of mailing one issue--by any of the options. PLEASE let us know if you move. Book and UPS are non-forwardable.

If any copy of A&E has missing or illegible pages, notify Lee Gold and send a self-addressed, stamped envelope--and a replacement page will be mailed to you.

NINE-hole stencils for sale at 20¢ plus postage. (PLEASE read the next page carefully before trying to type up a stencil.)

SOME NOTES FOR WOULD-BE CONTRIBUTORS WHO HAVEN'T TYPED STENCILS BEFORE

1. Buy 9" wide (9 hole) stencils (or 8.5" wide, 4-hole stencils--and think a few kind thoughts for the printer). Your stencil will have a film sheet (transparent plastic), a wax-impregnated stencil attached at the top to a heavy paper backing sheet (DON'T detach it), and a cushion (tannish or white paper or black carbon).
2. Buy STENCIL CORRECTION FLUID aka corflu (usually blue or green). CORRECTION FLUID for xerox/offset typing will not work properly.
3. Type with the typewriter on stencil setting (or remove the ribbon)--with the film between the stencil and the keys--and the cushion glossy side up (next to the stencil) between the stencil and backing sheet. You can reuse the film and the cushion. (Throw out any tissue paper separator between film and stencil.)
4. Type the stencil lines 5-64. (If you bought "church bulletin stencils," start five lines below the top of the first box and type to the bottom of the second box. Type 7" across centered (70 spaces on a pica typer; 84 on an elite). Single space; double space between paragraphs. Don't type a paragraph longer than 15 lines if you want your stuff read easily.
5. Correct mistakes by daubing corflu over them, letting it dry, and retyping.

After typing the first stencil, hold the stencil up to a lamp. If you can't see the light clearly through the letters you typed, you aren't typing hard enough. (DOT MATRIX and DAISY WHEEL typers/printers usually need 3+ impressions on each letter.) If your underlining cuts through the stencil, you're typing too hard and may wind up with ink spots or a torn stencil.

For mailing: remove the film and cushion. DO NOT DETACH THE BACKING SHEET OR CUT THE STENCIL. Do not crease any folds in the stencil. Cardboard backing in envelopes is NOT necessary.

If you have over 15 typos or misspellings per page, the page will be retyped. Please note: ITS = of it, IT'S = it is; THEIR = of them, THEY'RE = they are. No space after an opening quote or parenthesis. Two spaces after a period.

DIAGNOSING PROBLEMS--after seeing how your stencil printed

If a few words or lines are too light, the problem may be corflu. Old corflu gets thick and doesn't spread well because the ether evaporates. Buy a new bottle--or use less corflu.

If your mistakes print even though you corflued them, use more corflu. (A vertical light streak or overall lightness is the fault of the printer.)

Remember to lift up the film and apply corflu directly to the stencil--and wait a minute for it to dry before typing over it. If you don't use a cushion, lift the stencil away from the backing sheet before corfluing; otherwise the stencil will be stuck with wax to the backing sheet and will smudge or tear. When correcting a large area, rub it with something blunt like a paper clip's rounded end before corfluing.

DRAWING ON STENCIL means scratching the wax with a sharp tip that won't cut the stencil. (Try a toothpick if you don't want to buy a stylus.) Put a stencil drawing plate (or a sheet of sandpaper) under the stencil.

If some of your typed letters (the ones with circles like a, b, c, d, e, g, o, p, q) seem blurrier than others, the typer's keys are dirty. Clean out the encrusted ink with a toothpick or unbent staple or old toothbrush. If your typer sometimes cuts out the center of an o or other circle letter, don't worry. If it does so consistently, type less hard or don't underline. NEVER underline more than 2-3".

Back Issues: #68, 70, 76-101. Or check with Balboa Games, 630 N. Willow, Long Beach, CA 90806 at \$3.15/Issue including postage. Or check with Dragon's Lair, 8316 Blondo, Omaha, Neb., 68134 at \$3.15/issue including postage--for #58, 60, 63, 65-6, 68, 70+.

TO APPEAR IN #103: Redden, Saunders, Gliham, Zaik, Robillard, Fraser, Waters, Goldberg, Woolley, Larter, Galeotti, Teller, Phillies, Bolt, Stevens, Brooks & Elin, Foster, Pixley, Ellwood, Stead, Long, Roberts, Heydt, and Dunham--about 100 pages.

TO APPEAR IN #104: Goldberg, Larter, Galeotti, Foster, Phillies, and Saunders--about 18 pages.

This Issue Includes

Cover
A Few Paragraphs
Tantivy
FRP Herbalism
The Golden Dragon #57
Terra Ferretae
Tales from the Northern Woods
The Murdered Master Mage
True But Probably Unimportant
The Runelord Writes
Helmskringla
Exeunt Omnes
The Otyugh Obituary
Starships and Sorcery
Agents of Fortune
The Fifth Flagrant Blossom
The Alabaster Albatross
From the Tower of Dreams
Montmorillonite Man-o-War-Bird
Mome Raths
The Otyugh Speaks
Tales of Magic
Chaotic Kzin
Round Up the Usual Suspects
Notes from the Wilderness
Stuffing
Defenseless Ravings
The Least Key of Solomon
From the Rusty Pittsburgh Gates
The Anglo Saxon Chronicle
Senile Sage
I Ching, You Claudius
The Colgar Chronicles
Review of SUPERWORLD
Sapristi Nockos
Azmadian Tales
Yunshan Shanfu
The Other True Way
Dark Ages Pages
Ouroboros

January 8, 1984

Ken Murphy	1	GD
Lee Gold	4	WH
Lee Gold	4	PK
Lee Gold	2	GR
John Sapienza	8	WH
Robert Saunders	3	YE
Jenny Hein	1	YE
George Phillies	2	GD
Steve Jones	2	BL
John Sapienza	4	GD
Laurence Gillespie	12	WH
Peter Murray	12	GR
Vincent Foster	6	YE
David Union	9	WH
Steve Gliham	5	WH
Rob Heinsoo	1	GD
Simon Cornelius	3	GD
Jonathan Aird	2	BL
Nick Larter	5	WH
Eric Sadoyama	1	WH
Vincent Foster	2	PK
Ronald Pehr	3	GR
Dana Carson	1	GR
The Forresters	9	WH
David Mallinak	1	WH
Martin Ellison	2	YE
Todd Hintz	1	GD
Hank Griffin	3	GD
Scott Bauer	10	WH
Peter Clarke	2	BL
Robert & Rule Clifford	4	PK
Harry Robertson	3	WH
Jenny Hein	3	WH
Richard Schwall	1	YE
Peter da Silva	3	YE
Bill Keyes	12	WH
Edward Wilson	4	GR
Quentin Long	3	WH
Martin Wixted	1	WH
Robert Plamondon	5	GD

#103 will be hand-delivered at Boskone to anyone usually there--or who writes me saying they will be attending this year. As of January 8, 1984 LoA was not yet quite back from the printers. But should be done, boxed and sent out fairly soon. And we are 30 pages less in the held-over zines stack than this time last month. Definitely no more coups until A&E is no longer booked up this far in advance.

PUBLICATIONS OF POSSIBLE INTEREST TO A&E READERS

ABYSS, ed. David Nalle, bimonthly, 1402 21st ST. NW, Wash DC, 20036, \$1.25/issue, \$5/6 issues; overseas +\$1/issue; offset, digest-sized.

DIFFERENT WORLDS, pub. Chaosium, Box 6302, Albany, CA 94706, \$2.75/issue; US 1 year/\$24; Canada/abroad (surface) 1 year/\$32; offset, slick.

DRAGON LORDS, ed. Ian Marsh, Avalon, Grams Rd., Walmer, Deal, Kent, CT14 7PU, England, 60 p/issue (checks payable to Mike Lewis), digest-sized, offset.

THE FANTASY GAMER, from Steve Jackson Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760; 3 issues/\$8; 6 issues/\$13; 12 issues/\$23; Lifetime \$200; bimonthly.

THE FANTASY HERALD, pub. Sun Reach Publications, 44 Candleriggs, Glasgow, Scotland, £3.6/6 issues domestic, internat'l rates on request; digest-sized, offset.

THE WILD HUNT, ed. Mark Swanson, 40 Bow St., Arlington, MA 02174; \$1.50 Plus postage; Boston-based APA, monthly.

WHITE DWARF, pub. Games Workshop, Ltd., 27/29 Sunbeam Rd., London NW10 6JP, England; 75p/\$3/issue; £10/\$45/year; slick, offset.

WYRMS CLAW, pub. Original Thought, 95 Norris Rd., Brooklands, SALE, Cheshire, M33 3GS, England, £4/\$15/year. Offset, digest-sized.

NUTS & BOLTS of Gaming, 3753 W. 80th Pl., Chicago, IL 60652, \$2.25/issue, one year US \$10.20, Canada \$12.20, overseas surface \$13.20. Prozine.

A BRIEF GUIDE TO OCCASIONAL ABBREVIATIONS FOUND IN A&E

D%	percentile dice	HP	Hit Points	RQ	Runequest
D#	#-sided dice	HD	Hit Dice	D&D	Dungeons & Dragons
SP	Spell Points	L	Level	VD&D	Variant D&D
EP	Experience Pts	K	thousand	AD&D	Advanced D&D
AC	Armor Class	2H	two-handed	LRS	Land of the Rising Sun
DMG	Damage	GP	Gold Pieces	AG	Arduin Grimoire
HTK	Hits to Kill	BP	Body Points	TFT	The Fantasy Trip
PBM	Play by Mail	FP	Fatigue Pts	YRS	Ysgarth Rules System
HTH	Hand-to-hand	XP	Experience Pts	LoA	Lands of ADventure
STR	Strength	BVC	Bardic Voice	POW	Power
WIS	Wisdom	INT	Intelligence	SIZ	Size
DEX	Dexterity	CON	Constitution	AGY	Agility
CHA	Charisma	APP	Appearance	Wpn	Weapon
				CL	Cleric
				MU	Magic User
				T	Thief
				F	Fighter

RAEBNC = Read And Enjoyed But No Comment ct = comment

A&E Alarums & Excursions DW Different Worlds WD White Dwarf
TWH The Wild Hunt TD The Dragon EGG E. Gary Gygax

PLEASE express all HP or damage ranges as dice instead of numbers.
That is, say 5D10 or 5xD10 but NOT 5-50. Thank you.

NOTE: for those puzzled by A&E's Table of Contents:
a zline listing in the ToC includes the fan magazine's TITLE, AUTHOR, number of
PAGES and COLOR of paper for easy location in the apa.

BL	Blue	PK	Pink	WH	White
GD	Gold	GR	Green	YE	Yellow

TANTIVY

by Lee Gold; (213) 306-7456

PAIN for Lands of Adventure (c) 1984, Gold

LoA Option

Pain is caused by Injury or torture -- or by Illusion.

1 Pain pt per 10% Body Points down

1 Pain pt per Life Point down

1 Pain pt per broken bone

1 Pain pt per Torture success; 2 Pain pts for Maximum Success

(I would assume that Torture would require 5 minutes to perform.)

Illusions - as above, depending on what the Illusion is of. Pain is an Internal Sense, rather than Immediate or Distant.

REgeneration

Torture Pain: 1 point per hour

Body Pain: 1 point per day

Life Pain/

Bone Pain: 1 point per 10 days

If Pain exceeds CON

(possible distraction)

make PRUDence roll or exercise Skills at -1 Priority

If Pain exceeds 2xCON

(distraction plus possible fainting)

make PRUDence roll or faint for Pain pts rounds--and exercise Skills at -1 Priority on reawakening. Additional chance of fainting each time wounded thereafter until Pain regeneration brings it to less than 2xCON.

If PRU roll made, exercise Skills at -1 Priority.

If Pain exceeds remaining Energy Pts (AGY+PRU+STR)

(low Energy = All Out Defense)

no attacks, magic, miracles possible

If Pain exceeds PRU

(Judgment, Morale affected)

~~the person must choose an option and stick to it thereafter until Pain is regenerated.~~

In a fight, options are: 1) flight, 2) all-out attack at maximum speed (no dodge/parry), 3) surrender.

For a torture victim, the options are: 1) ~~pretending to have fainted~~ and remaining silent even when found out, 2) insulting captors wildly, and 3) telling all and giving full cooperation.

NOTE that normal LoA damage which doesn't result in loss of consciousness is regenerated over a period of hours. This system was chosen less for realism than for satisfying gamers used to the rapid healing of D&D and similar games, as LoA healing is relatively rare. This pain system is presented as an add on option for those who want wounds to be longer duration and more crippling to the character's abilities.

An average LoA male human is 32/15/11 (32 Energy, 15 Body, 11 Life points).

An average fighter's sword does 6 BP on a surprise attack; 3 EP and 3 BP on a normal attack; 12 BP and 6 LP on a surprise critical attack; 6 EP, 6 BP and 3 LP on a normal critical attack. (It has 20% chance of breaking a bone on a critical hit.) A victim would thus take 4, 2, 14, or 7 Pain points respectively (plus 20% chance of +1 for the broken bone). A person with average CON and PRU and EP would only suffer Immediate Pain effects from the surprise critical, which would create Pain exceeding CON and PRU. However, the cumulative Pain of several battles might well eventually affect such a fighter, even though EP/BP/LP had all healed up nominally.

It's January fourth and A&E #102 (February) is quite full, except for Tantivy. I could wait until our Greek game in 10 days and include a campaign writeup, but I think it'll be nicer to finish up this zine and the issue now, put the writeup in nextish, and be able to hand out the issue at the game. So here goes with comments on #101....

ME: Bizar phoned up and said that LoA was at the printers but he had somehow misplaced the character sheet. I sent him another copy which he got shortly. The game was due out by Christmas "unless the printers were unaccountably late." Which they were. Maybe by the time you've gotten this, LoA will be available! Maybe.

COUP: Actually the original Aussie coup didn't aim at 75 pages, let alone achieve it. May I suggest that the "magic 75 mark" drift into oblivion and people aim for 50 pages maximum instead. And that the real aim be to showcase writing quality. //The original coup cover was discarded and another one dropped in, so the Intro's allusions to the coup cover's quality no longer apply.

HEIN/MURRAY SKILL SYSTEM: This is for me a reductum ad maximum as to what's wrong with RQ-style Skill Lists. You have to look up each skill to find out how to learn it or gain it in combat, to find out its initial %age, etc. It's all ad hoc with no general classes/guidelines. This makes it nearly impossible to create an NPC with Skills on the fly. It also means that there aren't good guidelines for what a new skill, not on the list, should be like. //Nitpick: Lists of this sort work better if, fully alphabetized, not merely grouped by first letter.

WES IVES: Welcome back. You might have your dot matrix printer give one more stroke per letter in the future. //Agreed that maintaining a consistent and roleplayed universe is primarily the job of the GM. And of course, the higher the quality of roleplaying the NPCs, the more interesting the PCs tend to get roleplayed. //I strongly suspect A&E won't last forever. But thanks for the kind words. Urr, I'm not sure the universe could stand more than one of me. //

HEYDT: What about SCA blows hit locations using 2-handed weapons (i.e. no shields)? //Interesting examples. In LoA a properly roleplayed human would make optimum use of his Energy Pts during a fight and--given the luck to score Critical Hits--could achieve the sort of results you mention once in a while--and of course would still end up dying most of the time. The animals would have less sophisticated tactics but do overall more damage.

GALEOTTI: The real problem has to do with the fact that so many games don't specify how much a loaf of bread costs--or have the cost of bread set in an unrealistic ratio to the cost of a sword. In fact, perhaps the cost of a standard sword would be more useful as a game-to-game exchange value. //As GM I view it as my job to give PCs a chance to kill themselves rather than to either kill them or protect them. I haven't killed any PCs lately, but then my players are fairly prudent (and so are their PCs).

TURNER: Amusing story. //I won't analyze your Rules in detail but will comment that it takes on the average 3 hits by a two-handed weapon, 5 hits by a one-handed weapon, and 8 hits bare-handed to kill someone...with minimal CN. Even in a game with no provision for healing, this may be a little kindly. There are a number of other problems, but the cure for them lies in increasing complexity--which obviously is not what is desired for this particular game.

PATTERSON: That's LOA I'm putting out Culture Packs for, not LRS. //Actually given the number of Britons who've asked me to explain the meaning of "Alarums and Excursions" (a Shakespearian reference) and "Tantivy" (a fox-hunting cry), I'd say there's a lot of ignorance on both sides of the Atlantic.

SAPIENZA: Since LoA carries ALWAYS cost Energy Pts and -- fast-paced blows usually cost EP (you have a SKILL * 100% chance the blow won't cost EP; usual maximum skill is 120% with 160% being remotely possible for the extremely persevering and lucky) and dodges for more than minimal effect (MOV Rating, typically 20%) cost EP-- and since you usually only have 33 EP to start out with, even a highly advanced LoA character will run out of energy in combat fairly quickly. Knowing this, one chooses a fighting strategy to husband one's resources--or goes all out and either wins or loses quite quickly.

I considered that Burchett's 2-3 lines per major Japanese mythic creatures/deity was too oversimplistic to be at all useful. Anyone who can mention Kappa and not even note the saucer-like depression on the top of their head which contains water! (If the water spills, the Kappa's strength goes. One traditional way of beating one is to bow to him; he politely bows back and...whoops!) Kappa are also renowned in folklore for skill in bone-setting which they sometimes teach people who outwit them or outwrestle them. They are notable wrestlers, and drag their victims into their streams/lakes (and suck out their innards through the anus). I think Burchett mentioned their physical size (short) and habitat area (mountain streams) and left it at that. *Grump*

Given that you can always move away (unless you're unconscious or tied up), an energy spell that does the same damage each round isn't all that more powerful than one that lasts only one round and then blinks out. (Unless of course its area of effect is too huge for a person to move out of it during the first round.)

GILLESPIE RIDDLE: Okay, is the tree with black and bright leaves the Day (with day and night)?

ROBERTSON: Traditionally Dock is the antidote for Nettles (but Culpepper doesn't mention this).//As I understand it, carnivores typically prey on the elderly, the young and the injured. If Elves help cull out forest trees and animals, no reason they couldn't be carnivores and use lightning-struck trees or diseased and incurable trees for wood and so on. (Hmm, Elves with pointy fangs as well as pointy ears! What an interesting idea!)//Most roots that were even vaguely phallus-shaped were once considered aphrodisiacs.

DAWSON: Nope, I don't enjoy single PC to ref games. I play for Sense of Wonder, so no, I wouldn't enjoy playing Lynn Normal in a non-fantasy, non-SF, real world-based game. (Actually, trying to play someone with normal interests and pursuits would be playing someone quite alien to myself and my usual way of life. It just wouldn't be interesting.)//I'm not denying that roleplaying and socializing are different. It does seem to me though that it's hard to roleplay if the socializing aspect is fraught with tension/hostility. And vice versa.

Party unity isn't the point here. If you'll recall the original Sapienza controversy centered not around party unity but around neglecting other PCs and going off to form a separate sub-party which had its own adventure, so that most of the other players were left twiddling their thumbs.

Remember that people affect one another. Eventually Mucke will either get a group of companions who stop bugging him to tell all about magic--or start seeing why they are perplexed/interested and open up a little. Eventually Stoffs will either stop working with non-Stytegians or start accepting them as respect-worthy. Eventually people change, due to their surroundings. This is as much an aspect of roleplaying (showing character growth/change) as the ones you have cited.

GILLESPIE: As a non-Christian I'm very interested in your reaction. Could you (or anyone else) send me a letter giving examples of various games'/players' treatments of Christianity that bothered you.//I got a shock just going to Vancouver for Westercon and seeing how late the sun set and how early it rose.

Some years ago someone (I forget who) pubbed a gaming filk to the tune of Both Sides Now. I didn't like the scansion or quality of wit or other things, but I did like the idea of a gaming filk based on that song. Here's my version.

Ugly mugs and dirty hair
And poisoned arrows in the air;
The killers of great Gondor's heir--
I've looked at orcs that way.
But now they're only one hit die.
A fireball, a lullaby--
We slit their throats and let them lie
And take their gold away.
I've looked at orcs in both ways now,
In books and games--and still somehow
It's orcs' contusions I recall.
I really don't know orcs...at all.

Dancing spheres of rainbow light,
A staff of wood, and robes of white,
Old words that summon things of might.
I've seen a mage that way.
But now his skill's no mystery.
His spells are from a list; you'll see
The chart is on page forty-three;
He gets one use a day.
I've looked at mages both ways now,
In books and games--and still somehow
It's their...illusions I recall.
I've never known a mage...at all.

Shining teeth and shadow cape,
Hypnotic eyes you can't escape,
A kiss that verges on a rape.
That's how a vampire seems.
But now it's EP they must drain.
They'll cross a river without pain.
They've somehow struck another vein
And do not haunt my dreams.
I've looked at vampires both ways now
In books and games--and still somehow
It's their...transfusions I recall.
I've never known Undead...at all.

COMMENTS ON #101 CONTINUED

ROBILLARD: Welcome to A&E.//One of my college profs claimed that spontaneous abortion rate is influenced by whether the parents' blood types and such are the same or different.//Felt markers tend to bleed through to the other side of the page. I prefer a small inked x by the actual idea plus another dot in the corner of the page.//You can also figure that protoplasm is about 55 lbs per cubic foot. (Well, actually you'd probably prefer getting the metric equivalents.) Figure Width as one-third height for humanoids (and depth as about half width).

DA SILVA: Right, getting a medal or being a hero should increase your CHA, not your fighting skill. (It might thereby Increase your skill at Persuasion, of course.)

WARING: fun writeup. Thanks.

FRP HERBALISM --part six (by Lee Gold, taken from Culpepper)
concentrating on FRP Herbal Applications; herbs arranged by month of flowering

JULY: continued from lastish

<u>Plant</u>	<u>ruled by</u>	<u>comments</u>
Basil	Mars, Scorpio	Grows in gardens.//An enemy to venom and other poisons. Aphrodisiac, abortifacient.
Betany (Wood)	Jupiter	Grows in shady woods.//Preserves from witchcraft.
Betony (Water)	Jupiter Cancer	Found by the side of ditches and other water courses; the seed is ripe towards the end of summer.//Leaves boiled with honey help wounds, inward or outward.
Bitter Sweet	Mercury	Found in moist and shady places; it twines around hedges.//Tied around the neck, it prevents dizziness.
Bryony	Mars	Found on banks or under hedges.//The roots go very deep. If bruised they act as a healing compress to broken bones. If eaten, a mild poison.
Burnet	Sun	Found in dry pastures and well-drained calcareous soils.//Two or three leafy stalks in claret drive away melancholy. The juice defends against the pestilence. Also used against wounds.
Calamint	Mercury	Grows on heaths and uplands and dry ground.//Abortifacient.
Catmint	Venus	Found in hedgerows, roadsides, field edges, waste ground and gardens.//Takes away barrenness in women.
Centaury	Sun	Found in fields, pastures and woods.//Washing with the decoction takes away freckles.//The juice with a little honey clears the eyes.
Chamomile	Sun	Flowers boiled in lee are good for a headache.//Grows everywhere, esp. in dry sandy soils and grassland.
Dill	Mercury	Found in herb gardens; in Mediterranean countries wild in grainfields.//The seeds, boiled and drunk, ease pain.
Dittany (of Crete)	Venus	Grows in gardens and as a window sill ornament.//The roots are used against poison and pestilence.
Down (Cotton Thistle)	Mars	Found in roadside, waste ground and fields.//The leaves are healing.
Elder (Dwarf)	Venus	Found in waste places and roadsides. The berry ripens in the autumn.//Helps bites, burns and scaldings.
Eryngo	Libra	Found in coastal areas and sandy places.//Aphrodisiac.
Fennel (Sow or Hog's)	Mercury	Found on banks by the sea.//Juice used with vinegar and rose water, put to the nose, helps those with lethargy, frenzy, giddiness or headache.
Feverfew (Corn)	Sun	Found in grainfields, waste ground, gardens, and on banks.//Like Chamomile.
Figwort	Venus	Found in moist and shady woods, and the lower parts of fields and meadows.//Decoction drunken or bruised herb applied outwardly dissolves blood from wounds.
Flag	Moon	Found in marshes, wet woods, and wet ground by rivers, lakes and ditches.//The roots are used against pestilence and also in sweet bags and perfumes.
Foxglove	Venus	Grows on dry sandy ground, under hedgesides, and in gardens.//Used to heal fresh wounds by binding the leaves to them.
Galingale	Mars	Found in marshes.//Good for giddiness.
Gentian	Mars	Found in pastures with chalky soils.//Resist poison and pestilence. Preserve against fainting.
Gladiole (Water)	Saturn	Found beside ponds and pools, ditches, and in marshes.//Cools fresh wounds if flowers are bound to them.

<u>Plant</u>	<u>Ruled by</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Gladwin	Saturn	Found in woods and shady places, esp. near the sea.//Root plus some verdigris and honey and Great Centaury root helps head wounds.
Goat's Beard	Jupiter	Found in meadows and roadsides.//A decoction of the roots is good for loss of appetite.
Golden Rod	Venus	Found in woods and heaths.//A sovereign wound-herb, made into a tea from young leaves, fresh or dried.
Goutweed	Saturn	Found by hedges and walls, in the borders of fields, and grown in gardens.//Used for aching joints.
Green (Winter)	Saturn	Found in mossy pine woods.//Leaves bruised and applied heal fresh wounds speedily. Or use juice instead. Or an ointment can be made with wax.
Hemlock	Saturn	Found by walls, hedges, and stream sides.//Dangerous if taken inwardly. Pure wine is the best antidote.
Herb Christopher	Saturn	Found in woods and scrubland.//Berries are poisonous.
Hollyhocks	Venus	Found in gardens.//The root is used inwardly and outwardly for bleeding wounds.
Hops	Mars	Found in gardens, wild in hedgerows.//A decoction of the flowers and tops helps expel poison.
Horehound (Black)	Mercury	Found in waste places, roadsides and hedges.//Leaves beaten with salt and applied to a wound cure the bite of mad dogs.
Horehound (White)	Mercury	Found in roadsides and dry waste places.//A decoction of the herb and roots is given to people who have taken poison.//Juice with wine or honey clears eyesight.
Horsetail	Saturn	Found in wet, boggy ground.//Heals fresh wounds.
Ivy	Saturn	Grows in woods around trees and on stone walls of houses and churches.//Fresh leaves boiled in wine cure burns.//Berries powdered and drunk in wine prevent and heal plague.
Lang de Boeuf	Jupiter	Found in gardens and fields, esp. in clay soils.//Good for malignant fevers.
Lavender	Mercury	Found in gardens, or wild in mountainous Mediterranean countries.//Two spoons of the distilled flower water help those who have lost their voice.
Lavender (Cotton)	Mercury	Cultivated in gardens as an edge; found in Mediterranean countries. An antidote for venom and other poisons.
Lettuce (Grass Wild)	Mars	Found in ditch sides and hedgesides.//A syrup made from a strong infusion eases pain and gently disposes to sleep. It also eases spasms and convulsions.
Lime Tree	Jupiter	Found in woods and open forests; cultivated in parks and gardens.//Flowers used for vertigo.
Madder	Mars	Found in gardens.//Produces red and yellow dyes.//A decoction of the roots is good for bruises.
Mandrake	Mercury	Found in gardens.//The fruit has been considered poisonous but is not. The leaves in an ointment cool wounds.
Mint (Garden)	Venus	Found in gardens, scattered places.//Stimulates appetite.
Mint (Pepper)	Venus	Found in gardens and moist places like river banks.//Stimulates appetite.
Mugwort	Venus	Found in wasteland, watersides, near footpaths and hedges.//The fresh herb or juice is a remedy for an overdose of Opium.
Mustard (Hedge)	Mars	Found by hedges and roads, on waste ground.//The yellow seed is a remedy for poisons and venom.
Nightshade (Deadly)	—	Found in woodland clearings in the shade of trees.//Poisonous if eaten but leaves and roots cool inflammations.

IN SEARCH OF THE KING: FOOLCON II REPORT

The Royal Society of Foolkillers held its second invitational event in the hills and forests of New Jersey over the weekend of October 21-23. The location was a YMCA camp, Linwood-MacDonald, in Stokes State Forest. This was rather out of the way for most of us, a seven hour trip for our group from D.C. (allowing for a stop for dinner at the Chester Country Diner on Rt. 206 for reasonable food at reasonable prices). The advantages of the camp are avoidance of distraction and economy of the facilities. For \$55 a head, the RSFK was able to house us for two nights and feed us five meals of plain but filling food. Of course, you had to bring a sleeping bag or bedroll to make the bunks habitable, but at least it was bunks in cabins and not the great outdoors (complete with rain and chill over this weekend). All in all, a most satisfactory accomodation--does anyone know of something similar within a two hour drive from D.C. for holding a similar event sometime?

The directions to the camp were somewhat unartfully selected, at least from the south. Instead of the recommended route, we came up I-95, crossed the Delaware Memorial Bridge, took the New Jersey Turnpike up to Exit 10, went west on I-287 to Somerville, and took Rt. 206 north from there. It would have been helpful to know that you should look for the Stokes State Forest entrance sign and go approximately an additional three miles to find Foxboro Road opposite the State Police barracks, as the entrance to the camp. (If you are interested, the exact change to bring for tolls on the above route is \$1 for I-95 in MD and another \$1 in DE; 60¢ for the bridge; and \$1.30 for the turnpike.) The distance from the Culver Lake entrance to Foxboro Road is about five miles. (Hmm, Regina's notes say "Foxboro," but the RSFK directions say Flat Brook Road, and I don't know which is correct.) The total distance from D.C. to the camp was about 280 miles.

It was well worth the trip. Once again, the RSFK put together a minicampaign growing naturally from a society, its environment, history and gods. The gamers were 30, divided into five groups of six each. They were given a common starting place: the army encampment on the rim of the mysterious valley into which the King and his hunting party disappeared. Each day the adventurers were roughly bunched up by the general and given whatever clue was available and sent off into the mists. This way the groups were able to mix and match different players over the four game sessions of the weekend, so we got to interact with over half of the gamers.

Paul Rini and Anna Harmaty handled general management; Ken Rolston did the nine page flyer; Bill Herdle and Bob Kirk completed the five referees and scenario writers/testers; and Bob did the puzzle that was part of the quest. This was a painting on two sides of art board cut into twelve triangular pieces, which the players got to put together in various ways and to interpret these formations as clues as to the outcome of the total quest. Very impressive piece of work. The game mechanics were Paul Rini's OTHERWORLD rules, but the players didn't have to be familiar with these. In play you told the referee what you were trying to do, and let the ref handle the mechanics (although you were generally asked to roll the dice).

The King went off tiger hunting with a dozen members of the court and the usual faceless baggage handlers. The hunt went into the Valley of Mists, a perfectly circular valley some 15 miles across, which is a desert region and avoided for that reason and another by the inhabitants of the area. The other reason is that at odd times, generally roughly ten years apart, the valley would fill with mist from mid-afternoon to mid-morning of the next day. During that period, strange things came out of the valley, and people who ventured in came back with strange reports--if they came back at all. One of the things that came out a generation ago attacked a nomad tribe and was killed by a nomad hero. Its skull, with teeth the size of daggers, is still

on display. Apparently, the King and party were in the valley when the mists made their irregular appearance, and were still there when the mists vanished.

The loss of the King was a major shock for the Queen, whose daughter died last year after being kidnaped by trolls, despite major efforts by the kingdom to rescue her. That the Goddess Peace was discovered, freed and restored to her brothers and sisters among the Lords of Light is somehow not compensation to the Queen. Every effort will be made to find the King, whose disappearance is very strange. It's not unusual for hunters to become lost, but for the entire camp to vanish baffled both the royal court and the temples. Then the Queen started having dreams....Nobody can be sure if the dreams are from the gods or the Dark Lords or perhaps even the trickster Nechoho, who was involved in last year's war. But no stone will be left unturned, and no clue will be left unfollowed, so in addition to the populace conducting regular searches, volunteers will be sent into the Valley of Mists in pursuit of the Queen's visions, in which the mysterious mists uncharacteristically will return every day for several days. For every dream vision, a separate group will be sent into the mists.

My character was Arkad, priest of Sonta, the Goddess of Wisdom and Knowledge. As had happened last year, his innate curiosity led him in the pursuit of the unknown, and he volunteered to venture into the legendary mists, accompanied by his faithful mule. He took his customary light leather for protection, a hunting bow, and several blank journals for recording discoveries. The army provided horses for others who had not brought their own.

An early afternoon scouting along the rim of the valley showed the expected badlands, rock and sand and scrub and little water. Not very promising, but then it shouldn't conceal the royal party much either. By midafternoon, a mist started forming in the center of the valley, rising and filling the valley bowl up to the very top. This proved that the valley was not only circular but also exactly flat, as Arkad busily scribbled notes. He was interrupted by the soldiers, who started pushing the group into the mist. As a precaution, he lit a torch which continued to burn in the mist, despite the wetness and the wet smell.

After walking some tens of feet, the mist thinned out; and by the time the group was well into the valley, they were surprised to find that the mist was no longer visible. The sky was clear (Arkad noted that the sun was in the same position as when they entered), and the valley rim was clear--no sign of the goldiers. The apparently arid center had abundant vegetation.

The Queen's dream was cryptic: "to find the king, follow the arrow." Having no better idea, Arkad suspended one of his own hunting arrows from a string in its center, and the party followed where it pointed, toward the vegetation. Scouting cautiously, we found that the valley center seemed depressed, with steep cliffs between us and the center. We seemed to be seeing the tops of trees, and occasionally we could hear crashing and animal noises below. We also seemed to have someone watching us from the trees. We found a tree branch forming a ramp to the cliff top, with a flattened surface about three feet wide naturally grown and covered with bark. But the arrow pointed to one side, and we travelled several hundred feet over until we found another ramp. Leaving our mounts reluctantly behind, we entered the forest tops.

In the trees, we came upon a native, a 4.5' green-skinned man. He was naked but carried a bow and seemed excited to see that several of us were also archers. He conducted us deeper into the treetops to his tribe, who lived in "houses" grown in the trees themselves. They weren't very skilled with the bow, because they had only recently been taught its use by the Great Matt who had been lost in a raid by a neighboring tribe, along with a number of children seized for sacrifices.

Was this the arrow we were to follow? Matt Victor had been a hunter with the king's party. We arranged to aid this tribe in a raid to recover their children (for

them) and Matt (for us). Their chief and their priest were enthusiastic and sacrificed one of their own captive children to ensure success.

The raid required us to travel the treetops at a slower pace than the natives. They could jump from tree to tree when they were close, while we required finding trees that had branch connections. This provided complications, for when we got to the other village, we found that the tree "house" in which the prisoners were kept would take several passages back and forth, not merely to reach the correct tree but to reach the correct level on that tree. And our allies proved unwilling to do as much of the fighting for us as we had hoped. But our archery and our two brave warriors unnerved the villagers, who allowed us to attain our limited goal, the freeing of the prisoners, and to escape with them.

Matt had been drugged and was unable to talk with us. My skills were too limited, and we had to carry him back for further care, which our allies agreed to in return for some of the goods we had with us, mainly arrows. Our mounts we could not find; they'd been chased by a predator and fled through the mist, and were later recovered for us by the army.

So our first expedition was a limited success. We'd recovered a member of the royal hunting party who might eventually be able to tell the Queen what had happened, to himself at least. And among his effects, we found a curious triangular painting with an image of a sun (Sonta?) on one side and a fractured crown (?) on the other. We discovered that three other groups had come back with similar pieces, which when placed edge to edge framed a hollow square. It seemed we would be seeking other pieces of this mystery during our travels.

The next afternoon, I was put with a different group of volunteers and went again into the mist. Knowing the danger from the cliffs, I persuaded our party to walk into the mist, leading our mounts. But once past the mist and into the sunlight again, we found ourselves in a fairly flat area of woods. The Queen's dream that we were given to follow was disconcerting: she saw a great Dragon nesting in a cliff wall. The soldiers who came to it were swallowed whole. Once in its chest, they petted and soothed its savage heart until it purred with delight and passed them through to a dungheap. Hmp. We met a peasant on a cart who thought at first we were tax collectors sent by the Baron Amor, an apparently harsh but pious lord who worshipped what the peasant described as the god of sky and sun, Ronta (who was obviously a confusion of the true Goddess Sonta). He advised us to avoid the baron, but equally advised us not to go into the valley of the dragon when we questioned him about that.

We went there anyway, of course, following a beaten path that ended just before the cliff face. Carved into the cliff from a single huge piece of rock was the entire head of the dragon, with its jaws agape and its tongue reaching down to the ground like a ramp. We took our mounts with us inside; and after going some ways down the "throat", came to a vast cavern that our torches could not penetrate more than a short way. We decided to pace out the boundaries of this cavern and walked along the wall, passing several pillars of rock that seemed to hold up the roof, and finding one narrow passageway which we put off exploring until we completed the cavern, which was roughly rectangular and appeared to have been carved so from a natural cave. On one end, we found a large platform which was a stone throne, elaborately carved with strange and disturbing scenes.

In the center of the cavern was what appeared to be a strange and slowly moving plant surrounded by mists. The mists came toward us and rose up to the throne area, which suddenly had upon it a distinguished-looking lord, who looked to be in his 30s but had greying hair along the sides of his head. He claimed to be lord of this realm and indeed lord of all realms. He did not give us his name, insisting on being called "your magnificence." I could not identify him and was confused when he said he appeared differently at different times. He did identify a member of our party as

one of the mysterious elves and claimed to have been known to his ancestors and claimed worship of him. He was dissatisfied at the elf's hesitation to do this.

The lord also knew me by name, which greatly perplexed me. He had become wroth with our party after failing to intimidate the elf, and declared that as we had failed to amuse him, he would amuse himself with us. He gestured at me and I was raised into the air with my limbs bent painfully when he exclaimed "Arkad!" and said he was pleased to see me again, and placed me upon a chair that he created for this out of the mist. I was greatly agitated at this, not knowing whether he was genuinely pleased with me for reasons I could not imagine or was playing with me cruelly with false friendship to be followed by more pain.

Another member of our group attempted to attack the lord, who was both annoyed and amused at this. He transformed this unfortunate man into a grub which was, however, the same size as the man. Once again, the brave man/grub attempted an attack and failed; this merely amused the lord, who gave him the power to speak in grub-form. Eventually, the lord allowed us to explain our mission, and we had provided him enough amusement that he allowed us to escape through the underground passages to the "dungheap," which was the baron's castle and town. The lord warned us against even touching anything of his on our way out, a warning we heeded carefully despite sore temptation. We led our mounts down a narrow stairway to a passage broken by a series of bronze doors. In alcoves down the passage we saw the appearance of friends and companions being tortured and imprisoned, but we deemed these to be illusions put there by the lord to test us, and passed them by. Our last test was discovering that the way out required us to abandon our mounts and climb a rock chimney, which we did.

At the top, we emerged from the mouth of another rock statue, this one of a demon. We followed the lord's parting advice not to seek the highest born but to seek the highest kept. Instead of seeking audience with the baron, who would have killed us, we looked for a way into the high tower and its prisoners. Our friend (still in the form of a grub) climbed the tower and looked through its bars (considerably frightening the prisoner). He had brought a rope with him, and got the prisoner to tie it to one bar while bending others out of the way.

The poor duke was already mistreated by his captors and somewhat out of his mind, and burned himself sliding down the rope. We slid down the outer wall on ropes as the baron's men readied pursuit (discouraged somewhat by our arrows). We would never have escaped if we hadn't found our mounts held at the base of the statue by a band of mist, however. We rode hard out of the valley and through the mists, pursued by a few of the baron's men, who were turned back by the army on the other side. We also recovered another piece of the painting, but only because the lord caused it to appear with us (calling us idiots for not removing it from the prisoner's cell). I suppose he found that amusing too. The poor duke was quite out of his mind because of his ordeal, but at least we recovered him alive.

Other groups had similar or lesser successes, as some members of the royal party were discovered to be dead. But no one had found the king, although one party had found a great antlered hart with the king's face. They had found a being that could take an animal apart and a man apart, and combine the pieces in a magical fire so each partook of elements of each original. This boded ill for the fate of the king. Oh, our friend the grub turned partway back to human after passing the mist and was fully rested under the care of the High Priest of Sonta.

The Queen's next dream was cryptic, consisting of three scenes. First, people working in a field, with several riders of odd form watching them. Second, an anvil and hammer seen close up; someone seemed to be making nails. Third, caves in a cliffside in twilight, with a thin trickle of smoke. We didn't know what to make of these but ventured into the mists to look for them.

This time we found a prosperous farming valley, with houses and fields nearby and a town farther away. There was a hard road near us; down the valley's center ran a strange road coming out of a cavern in the far cliffs. It was made of wood and had metal at the edges holding the wood together. We avoided this and rode toward a nearby field, where we were surprised to see that the field workers appeared to be supervised by trolls on horses! Although we approached openly, they did not notice us until we were about a hundred feet away, when the workers were told to go away while the riders dealt with us. Only I could speak with the trolls, and that only through Sonta's power. Their leader ordered us off our horses and told us to drop our weapons; he held a thing which I took to be a small throwing hammer. He expected us to be frightened of him and was upset that we were not. I eventually told him we would wait here for his superior to speak with us, and he rode off. However, we concluded that the trolls intended to capture us and could do so when they came back with more riders. We decided to escape while we could and rode away.

We were seen by trolls, and several groups mounted up to pursue us from different locations. We had to change directions several times, as we were prevented from reaching our original goal, a trail up the far cliffside, by the appearance from the cliff tunnel of a dragon or fire-breathing snake, that came down the strange wood and metal road to the town, right across our intended path. It was a wild ride across the entire valley, during which one group of trolls stood by one of the houses and attacked us with magic weapons we later found out were called "guns," doing severe damage to one of our party, who fortunately was able to remain on his horse. We galloped out of the valley and into the mists, with my poor mule valiantly struggling to keep up with the horses. We then had to ride all the way around to the other side to the army camp, and a long discussion of the situation.

A troll civilization? With humans as captive labor? Using magic? It was difficult to get the nobility in the camp to accept our report. Our only experience was with trolls who were childlike and whose society had little organization. It was clear we dared not return openly as before, with the valley in an uproar. We decided, much against the advice of the camp, to go in again at a different place than every other group had entered the mists. We would go in at the side where the cliffs were, on foot, seeking the vision of the caves and the campfire smoke. We had learned that there were escaped humans, and even some trolls sympathetic towards them. These were our goal, we hoped.

Fortunately we had not only two priests of Sonta in this group (and thus two who could understand strange tongues by Sonta's grace) but ones with some mountaineering skill. I went down the cliffside on a rope, with my fellow priest guiding the rope from above. In the cave I found two humans and a friendly female troll who told us more of the situation here.

Human civilization was long dead, known only through archaeological diggings. This was Year 1750 of Leva's Son. The Goddess Leva was dead, said to have been martyred for her people the trolls. They worshipped her son, but he did not support them as Leva had. Which meant no healing, no food, no aid of any kind on demand. The trolls had to support themselves and eventually discovered they could do so quite well. Humans, on the other hand, had fallen on hard times and had been enslaved by the trolls. Exactly what had happened to human civilization was unknown, but it sounded like there had been a War of the Gods, since at least Leva had been killed. This was decidedly grim.

I exchanged coins of our civilization for hers, and she gave us other goods like a pocket knife of a strange metal tolerable to trolls, and matches. The real treasure was four books she got from her house (she asked us for books, but we had none to offer). These were texts on geology, biology, chemistry and physics, a lifetime of study in themselves. Yet I could not but wonder whether this sudden new knowledge might be the factor that will lead to our eventual downfall? This would have to be kept hidden in Sonta's temple and only gradually put into use.

We also found that a fellow priest of Sonta, Ehweft, had come through the mists to here. These folk had helped him awhile, but when he attempted to reach the mists he was captured and was in the town jail, while the trolls decided what to do with him. There was a good chance he would be killed as an example of what happens to escaped human slaves. The friendly troll and her human companions felt there was nothing they could do for old Ehweft, and most of us felt equally helpless. But two of our company decided to attempt a burglary of the jail, a quiet jailbreak. They crept into the town, and one went into the jail, while the other watched outside. They ended up in the middle of a fierce fight with the troll "guns"--fortunately neither side was highly skilled with this deadly weapon. Ehweft used the last of his Power to fire the jail and was helped/carried away. They were pursued by trolls on horses, but their outside companion brought down several with his bow, and after a hair-raising chase they escaped the valley.

We rejoined them outside the mists, where Ehweft told his story. After a few days he had been captured by the trolls, freed by the anti-slavery group and taken to the cave to hide, and was captured again when trying to get to the edge of the valley and the mists, which he believed would allow him to get home again. While there, he exhausted all his spell capacity and most of his personal grace, which meant that Sonta was not hearing his prayers and renewing his spell powers while he rested. This raised grim possibilities that Sonta had died or left attending to humans just as Leva had for trolls. It also confirmed what seemed a reasonable theory to explain the divergences in what different groups found in the same valley. Apparently, travel through the mists was travel through time itself to earlier times or into the future. Alternatively, they could be very powerful illusions of some kind, powerful enough to let us bring things out of them to camp. But only a god has this kind of power, and why would they do so? Better to believe in the reality of what you can touch.

By the time all the groups were accounted for that day, the entire painting could be assembled from the pieces collected. One side showed a large, undamaged golden crown surrounded on four sides by glowing suns, apparently symbolizing prosperity. The other showed four broken crowns surrounding a broken crown over a troubled sea, with a large twisted wave going around and under the crown bearing fire to its base, and with a black tower on a black island in the scene. There was also a weird compass in the lower corner, showing all directions as north. We took this to mean that we must recover the King to forestall disaster for the kingdom, but we couldn't find any clue as to how to succeed.

The Queen's dream this time was the same for all the groups. She had seen the King torn into many living pieces, and had been unable to put the pieces together again. We were to find the pieces and bring them back to the kingdom anyway. Passing through the mist, we found ourselves on a beach on which black waves from a dead-black sea washed. Out to sea was visible an island on which stood a black tower, just as in the painting!

We found a rowboat large enough to carry the six of us to the island, but mistrusted the sea. So we walked around several hundred feet until we found a black rock causeway leading to the island, which we crossed. We entered the tower's only door, and found ourselves in a furnished octagonal room with a door on every wall. The furniture and the paintings on the walls were shrouded with cloths. When one of us removed the cloth from one painting, a door crashed open and a weird creature charged in, with three eyes in the center of its face and a mouth above and below them. The creature chased various of us out doors and back in other doors until, after removing the cloths from all the paintings, we found one was a mirror. Once the creature saw itself in the mirror, it ran away. Most peculiar.

We found a certain combination of doors opened revealed a stairway up, and we used this to climb to the top of the tower. In the room at the top stood a pale-skinned lady dressed in black. She told us we were not far from our goal, pointing out the window to the north.

We went down the stairs again and got in the boat and rowed north, not knowing where we were going but having nothing better to go on. We soon saw a large barge rowed by singing children, which crossed our bow. Its master forbade us to continue. He said he would kill the children, one by one, until we turned back, and cut the throat of one child and threw its body overboard as a demonstration. We boarded the barge and killed the master and threw him overboard. We were startled when the remaining children, who had stopped singing when we boarded the barge, cried "master!" and all jumped overboard. But there was nothing we could do to save them. One of our company, who had lost wife and child in a tragedy, was heartbroken at our failure to protect the children.

We took the barge, towing our rowboat behind, and came upon a small island on which sat two mermaids who called out to us to stop with them. We decided to have no part of a probable trap and went on, only to be pursued by the island and their voices saying they had something for two of us. We rowed on, and they jumped off the island swam swiftly after us, and leapt aboard the barge. They gave scrolls to two of us, which could not be read. One caused great fear in the mage who had wanted to save the children earlier. He said magic was too dangerous and would not even read the scroll. The other was given to Arkad who, even with the aid of a spell, could not understand it. We went on.

Our next encounter was with the Queen's barge, which was being attacked by a pirate galley. We couldn't understand why the Queen was here, and indeed some of us thought it an illusion and a trap and wanted to pass by. But we could not take the chance, and boarded the barge. Our best warrior found himself unable to hit any of the pirates, although he took little damage in the fight. And when we reached the Queen, she berated us in all ways and would not come with us, even when we realized her barge was sinking. When a quick-thinking companion coshed the Queen and tried to carry her to our vessel, we were appalled to see that she began merging into the barge, which was quickly turning to black sludge and merging with the black sea. We leapt onto our own barge and rowed on, despairing of ever finding anything that was real or rational.

We found a small island, dominated by a castle of gold. We tied our barge to the pier and went in. The castle was richly appointed with many valuable original works of art. We came to two doors: one the royal vault and one the counting room. The King was in his counting room, counting all his money. He was angry when we interrupted his count, but Arkad remembered his last words and told him the correct number which mollified him somewhat. But he refused to return to the Queen with us and had his golden guards arrest half our party and throw them out of the castle.

We didn't know what to do, since we couldn't even be sure this was the real King--in fact, he didn't behave like the King Morgan we knew. And the proposal to cosh the King and carry him out was dangerous (and treasonous, of course, under normal circumstances) and would possibly result in him and the island turning to black sludge under our feet. Most of us got into the boat, and two went back into the castle and the counting room to kidnap the King. This succeeded, and when the King was in the boat, the castle disappeared and a great wave swept us swiftly back across the black sea to the beach. From there we passed through the mists to the army camp.

Four parties had returned with aspects of the King, which when brought into the same tent merged into one King Morgan, restored at last. The fifth party returned with no part of the King and only half their number. They had despaired of finding the true King, and one had slain what he thought was a false King. In the resulting melee, two were killed and the kingslayer disappeared when he discovered the truth.

PLAYER KNOWLEDGE: The above is from the character level. At the end of the last scenario, we received a two page writeup of the underlying facts of the weekend's work. Morgrol, Lord of Fire, had made a bet with Peace, the youngest of the Lords of

Light. If the kingdom could succeed at a quest he would set, he would leave it to twenty years of peace and prosperity. But if it failed, he would have no interference from Peace in a planned Festival of Fear, Morgrol's specialty. All they had to do was face differing kinds of fear, in the initial tests. The last test would be to bring together five aspects of King Morgan: Heroism, Greed, Timidity, Playfulness, and Hedonism. In fact, the questors failed to return with the King's natural caution, which means Morgrol won his bet. The kingdom now has a King without his former timidity and can expect that the future will bring warfare and adventurism as Morgrol gets his way.

The wild card in this was another demon, Umphal, Herald of Chaos, Morgrol's chief lieutenant, who really wanted Morgrol to lose so he could have twenty years to play his own subtle games while the boss was away. He was the source of the Queen's dreams that gave hints to the questors and also of the puzzle pieces and certain magical assistance provided on the sly to the questors. He was the Lord of the Mist several groups encountered in the stone dragon, also. He was friendly toward Arkad because Arkad had been in the group that had freed Umphal from the heart of a volcano the previous year. This encounter and all the others occurred in alternative worlds reached by passing through the mists, in which Morgrol and the principle of Fear rule.

Each scenario contained keys to specific characters whose fears had been described to the RSFK during the character creation stage, designed to test the characters themselves as well as their puzzle-solving abilities. Some such are described earlier: a mage afraid of magic because a bungled spell had destroyed his wife and child, and a fighter whose fear was losing in battle to lesser foes, and another who feared being rejected by royalty (the last two on the Queen's barge, if this wasn't obvious).

I wonder whether the fix was in on the result. I was told the group that killed the Timidity-aspect of the King did so because the character who did it had sought knowledge of the Dark Lord Nechoho, who was involved in the quest for the lost Princess. He had been told that to understand Nechoho it was necessary for him to prevent his group from succeeding, and this is why he killed the King. When you prime a team member to sabotage the team's effort, it looks like a fix, and I hope to hear more on that from RSFK and maybe the player involved. Even though this leaves the situation in the kingdom flexible for more adventuring, this has got to be frustrating to the player who was the instrument, unless it had all been arranged ahead of time.

The scenario design was elegant, accounting for everything in the individual runs from a master plan that was not apparent to the players. My compliments to the Royal Society of Foolkillers for a well-run weekend of rolegaming fun.

This year RSFK ran four sessions instead of five, with one Friday night, one Saturday morning, afternoon and evening. This left Sunday morning open for games run by referees who had been players the previous days. (I don't have a list of who ran what, however.) I got my first experience in CHAMPIONS in a session run by Mike Maloney, using characters from his Dallas campaign. These are the Texas Rangers, superheroes made useful to a "normal" society by making them a police unit backed by the State of Texas in stamping out crime. I am not a comics expert, but Mike's scenario seemed faithful to its genre. I enjoyed the run, though I'm not convinced I'd want to get into superhero gaming to the extent it seems to have spread at MIT. I guess I just don't think in the genre. Thanks, Mike, for the demonstration.

Sunday afternoon was left for open gaming, but we left after lunch for the long drive home again. I'd happily drive back there if RSFK wants to do this much work and creativity again.

TERRA FERRETAE 5- 30/10/83

Robert Saunders,
4, Viewforth,
Edinburgh,
UK

Tel: 031-229-5152

This zine is being written hurriedly, as I've just seen how many pages have already arrived for A&E 101. I've got several things in the pipeline, though I don't know when I'll get them ready.

Is it a commonly observed fact that in Traveller the careers of criminal PCs are short and very, very tough? In Harry Robertson's Trav game today, my lave PC has been arrested with a severely pierced chest. It seems to me that when PCs start sitting on the wrong side of the law, they kind of commit themselves to a lengthy series of misdemeanors. Perhaps it's just me though, as most games of Trav I play in rapidly get vicious. I think I'm just not used to all that ironmongery. Anyway, on to:

FERRET MUMBLES : Comments on No. 98

First off, a brief comment to Alison Brooks, re her Qt to me in 99. I was an undergraduate here from 1977 until 1982 (continuously). Were you a Biologist here? I don't recognise your name.

LEE : I see the new British contributors appearing already. Maybe in the wake of the great UK coup de zine flop we'll muster sufficient enthusiasm for a Scottish takeover.//The Games G Gallery has reopened, so perhaps your A&Es will now be sold.//re ot to Reader, that games shop used to sell books about Tarot cards.

DAMBAUGH : I'm amazed at the quantity of material you have accumulated in the time since you first encountered mrvs.//I look forward to receiving the letter with Domesday references, though I can't guarantee that I'll have sufficient time to look at all 164!

MURRAY : I read your CoO write-up with interest, as I've just started a CoO campaign of my own. This is mainly at the request of my players, who went wild over CoO the first time I played it. Either this issue or next should see a write up written by one of my players.// Have you started pottering with the rules yet? I've started to change certain parts, such as the Sanity rules (as mentioned in TF3)

SIMPSON : re your packaging piece. It seems to have become traditional for RPGs to contain large numbers of mediocre to dreadful art.

BROOKS (again) : Like the olices.//I too have been to a talk by Duane Gish, and couldn't agree more.

BICK : Re ot to me. The only way I currently limit magic use to a few people is to keep the number of literate PCs to a minimum. Not only does successful magic use require literacy, it also requires knowledge of several languages.

What I really want to achieve is a situation where the number of magic using PCs and the amount and power of their magic are limited, but by cultural reasons rather than rules kludges. More on this subject next ish.

WOLOTT : Thanks for the review of "Stalking the Night Fantastic". This sounds like a pretty enjoyable game topic.

JAMES re ot to Murray. I've just roped a bunch of "normals". I'll be running a game on Tuesday with approx. 8 players, only one of whom is familiar with FRPGs.

CLAREN : I've got hold of two of those books you listed, and very helpful they look.//The town piece is interesting.

HARRY JUST TOLD ME WE HAD 50.67% , SO WE MADE IT. JUST.

McINTOSH : Are you by any chance another person who started getting A&E when the Games Gallery started selling it? I ask because you started getting A&E at No. 59.//re SF novel list, this would be very much appreciated.

A&E 99 arrived this morning (31/10/83), so on to : Comments on No. 99 (first impressions).

LEE : re ot to Murray. Are you familiar with the band named Altered Images? This goes some way in explaining this spell I think.

LEWIS : re ot to Lee. I'm toying with the idea of dividing skills in RQ, and SRP systems in general into two classes, those that can be learnt by practice, and those that must be taught.//re ot to Stukey. I agree re SRP weapons. It seems to me that when you start a rough-house in an SRP you've opened the gates to a bloodbath, largely due to all that powerful fire-power.//Liked the tale of Eric, though my version of magic differs from yours considerably.

KARIEVA : I run a rather conservative and low power game, in which there are no intelligent, humanoid races other than Humans (Trolls, goblins etc don't count) currently extant, at least as far as the PCs know. Magical beasts are rare, especially in the rather more civilised areas where the PCs spend most of their time.//I like your ideas on running a Middle Earth campaign.

GILHAM : Thanks for the clarifications on your system stuff of a few issues back. I think my initial confusion was due to your compressed style (this isn't meant to be rude, or a slugging) and split matrices.//No dumb questions from me this issue.

MASTERS : Do we have a MAGAZINE/DEVOTO fan amongst us? Did you like Devoto's solo effort (I see you've quotes from this too)?

TELLER : I was interested by PoP (what an acronym), though I can't rate it, as I've never played an SRP ever.

BROOKS (again) : Curiosity of Magick-users would indeed make such type-magic powerful, but surely only as a relative effect. By this I mean that a low power spell in those circumstances would be considered as powerful as a mega-fireball in another, magick rich world.//re ot to Zalk. A no-experience FRPG wouldn't be so bad if the PCs began with decent skill %s. It would, I feel, be more suited to modern day or SF RPGs.//if you did Zoo at Edinburgh, you may know my father. He probably lectured you. While you started at the same time as me you may have gone into 2nd year straight off?//Are you the Dr Alison Brooks that got rescued from Grenada, and whose picture is in the Times today (31/10)?

WILLMER : re ot to Jones. By "player ignorant" do you mean "system ignorant" or "stat ignorant"? The former is often a good idea. I tend towards Rulebending in games whose rules I know intimately, and which lend themselves to such treatment (eg AD&D). Such behaviour is impossible in a system ignorant game.

JAMES : A brief glance at your piece on planet generation in SRPGs looks promising. I'll examine it and comment on it later. At first look, it seems just the sort of thing I've been looking for, though my plans to run an SRPG have been severely delayed, not least by my players' insistence that I run CoO for them.

LONG : You're back! Where have you been?

WALLE : With the return of my local games shop, I may yet see an RE product.

Terra Ferretae continues now with a CoO write-up, "The Brockford Files", part 1. Part 2 next time I hope.

Recently I ried out Call of Cthulhu, and it went down so well with the players that I'm being forced to start up a full scale campaign. What follows is a write-up of an incident in the lives of a small group of Investigators. It was written by one of my players, Susan Drummond.

The Brookford Files, part one

The PCs:

Alex Millar: A 23 year old labourer from Vermont. Has become somewhat used to horrible things and events. Was forced to leave University due to Poverty. Played here by H. Robertson.

Peter Worthington III: An Author, and a rather second rate one. Not as clever or as talented as he likes to think. Has suffered since hitting the Cthulhu trail, with SAN25. Sometimes a good man in a crisis, but not usually. Played by S. Drummond.

Oliver Wendell Casllion: Quite smart but ever so slightly bigoted. An ex-coop from the south, sees Yankees and reds under every bed even when the ben is levitating towards him. This lack of imagination helps him to remain cool when all around are panicking. Played by H. Robertson.

Clerval Kremp: Strong, dependable, and dense. Definitely a good man in a crisis, hasn't the brain or imagination to foresee the worst. Played by S. Drummond.

Chelsea Stenton: An ex-anarchist, ex-hobo, ex-factory worker. Free thinker. As brave as she is smart as she is attractive as etc. Played by H. Robertson.

Tenth of January, 1921. Peter's Diary (extract)

The shades of night were fast encroaching on the remnants of wintry day as we drew up outside the old Brookford house. The wooded cliffs, the windswept promontory and icy sea, filled us with and heightened our awareness of being on the outskirts of civilisation; we could hardly wait to take possession of the house, build a fire, and create a cocoon of warmth against the outer desolation. [This is typical of Peter's writing-RS] Crunching our way through the days-old fall of snow, we fumbled with frozen fingers at the lock on the front door. For an instant, Clerval hesitated before opening it; God alone knew what lay in store in this place, but Clerval was not a particularly sensitive man - which is why I was happy to let him precede us into the dark hallway - and he shrugged off any misgivings as he found the light switch and clicked it on. The electricity, we had been assured, would work - and did, but only momentarily, before the hall light blew. Oliver, following immediately behind Clerval, cursed loudly and switched on his flashlight. I regret to record was rather less practical but, as I believe, far more understandable; I decided that it would be an infinitely better idea to turn around, get into the car and drive back to the nearest township as fast as possible. However, my steadfastly strong-minded and unimaginative companions merely laughed at such a foolish notion. So we entered the house with our torches, and found that thankfully the lights in the other rooms were working.

The ground floor contained the usual rooms, and also a study; upstairs were bedrooms and a games-room. The place was well-equipped but cold and musty, and we retired to the kitchen to light a fire and prepare some food from the plentiful array of dry-goods and cans in the larder.

A quick but comprehensive investigation of the study produced some interesting-looking notebooks, several of which seemed to deal with occult matters. It was unfortunate that Jethro, our 'expert' on the arcane, was not with us; much of

the writings meant nothing to us, and what we could glean gave us merely some basic information on the Cthulhu business. [Jethro Arkiss was hospitalised after an encounter with an animated bed two months previously-RS] But I must confess that what I myself saw from a quick glance at those fearful notebooks was enough to trouble my sleep that night - although, of course, it was nothing to the terrifying sequence of events which was soon to follow and of which I can scarcely think, even now, some weeks later, without horror and dread.

Oliver was in charge of cooking our meal for the evening. He concocted some disgusting variety of Hash, and managed to burn it. This did nothing to lessen my growing conviction that I should never have come here at all.

Eleventh of January, 1921. Chelsea's Diary (extract)

We all spent the night in the kitchen 'cause it was the only warm room in the whole place. We got up around 10am the next morning. No snow, no sunshine. Maine was staying mainly plain. But a weird and wonderful sky - snow sky, perhaps.

Anyway, there was this creepy cellar beneath the house - we'd opened the door the previous night, but no-one felt lik exploring. We decided to get it over and done with in the morning. Peter insisted on cooking breakfast and spent ages fussing over the poached eggs and getting them 'just right', so it was practically afternoon by the time we got down there. It was pretty empty - just some tools, logs, old boxes, the usual cellary type of things - but some shuffling around revealed a hollow-sounding part of the earth floor. Alex and Clerval eagerly grabbed some shovels and got digging - I reckon they thought they were back in Vermont, shovelling shit - and after going down through a few inches of soil they got to a wooden trapdoor. This was more like it! We managed to haul the door open, and in the beam of the torch we could see a stone floor beneath. There was a wooden ladder, but it didn't look too safe, so we settled for latching a rope from the car and lowering Alex and Clerval into the next basement. They yelled back up to us, sounding excited, and said they'd found a lot of weird carvings and a long, low piece of stone which could just conceivably have been an altar by the sound of it, especially if your mind works the way ours do. When dragged aside, this stone turned out to be covering an entrance onto a flight of stone steps, leading down into darkness which no flashlight could pierce. A fishy, salty smell drifted up to us, and it wasn't hard to guess that the steps emerged somewhere near sea level.

We all wanted to come down and have a look, but Peter reminded us that it was pretty late in the day to start on a new stage in the investigations, since we had to go out and chop firewood before the light faded. So the "altar" was replaced, we pulled Alex and Clerval back up, and we took a heavy table from the house and placed it, upended, over the trapdoor in the cellar. Not that we really thought there would be any danger lurking down there, but, well, you never know...

Eleventh of January, 1931: Oliver's account (extract)

Around teatime, the snow began, and it seemed like it would just keep on going for ever. In the evening, Alex and Peter went up to the games room to play billiards or some such damnfool namby-pamby game. Both of them are half-crazy anyway, what the hell. Anyway they hadn't been up there long when some crazy commotion broke out, and I hadn't hardly time to ask what in tarnation was going on when Peter came tearing into the room like the house was on fire - or like someone else had burnt the dinner again - and he just stood there gibbering so we had to shake him to get sense out of him. Chelsea was pretty shook-up herself at the sight of him, though she's crazy

herself anyway, damn radical, and even Clerval who's pretty sensible looked a bit worried - then Alex came rushing in and said not to worry. All that happened was, another bulb blew in the games room and Peter got shit-scared and bolted down here. I tell you that guy's nerves are shot. Damn fool crazy scribbler, no use to no-one. Alex tried to tell us that there was a strange atmosphere in the room, but I don't go for that kind of rubbish.

Anyhow we had to pour brandy down Peter's throat - we'd found a half-bottle in the house - and he couldn't have been totally out of his mind 'cause he managed to hang onto it for a while afterwards and drink most of it. That's another damn thing about writers, they drink like fish - can't nobody else get near the bottle. Anyhow I had to bring him to his senses with some of the old interrogation techniques I learnt as a cop. After a bit of slapping around he calmed down, and soon after that we turned in for the night.

That wasn't all though. Around 3.10 am - I checked - we were all woken up by some crazy chanting and sort of moanings coming from far away. Thank the Lord, Peter slept through it - he should've with all that booze - and it stopped after an hour or so. The others thought the noises were coming from beneath the ground, and they got kind of unsettled, but the racket didn't get any louder or closer. Of course all kinds of wild theories were being touted round the kitchen, but I didn't believe the talk of spooks and "nameless horrors". If anyone was meeting in some hole in the ground, it'd more likely be a crowd of Bolshies plotting against America. In fact I wanted to go off and find out, just in case it was and I could shoot a few, but no-one was too willing to come with me, and then anyhow it stopped and we all went back to sleep. Nothing else happened all night; I fell asleep hoping we were gonna find some interesting things down those steps the next day. And, Hell, we sure did...

I don't know how many of you out there recognised that scenario, but it was one of those contained in the rulebook. I've run one other from the rulebook, also with the above PCs, though this time only Harry was playing. It isn't clear from the above write-up, but the Investigators had been employed by the owner of the house to find the source of strange noises heard in the house. His name was James Brockford (changed from that in the text without punning intended), hence the title.

Continued miscellaneous mumblings by the Perret.

I'm definitely going to be at Games Day, so I hope to meet some of my fellow British A&Eers. -- Harry and I are making overnight ~~travels~~ crawls down to London by bus.

And now, a guest comment from Harry. Thrown in at the deep end. Opens 98 at random... ta-ra... The lucky recipient of the guest comment is BILL KEYES:Um...I suppose RARBNC isn't very useful is it...(Think,think) Ah...Read any good books lately,Bill?

Well that was a dismal failure was it not,Perret? What other bright ideas you got? Anyone ever been commented to in their own zine before?

No Harry, I don't think that's a good idea.

Some thoughts on Call of Cthulhu

As I've made abundantly clear so far this issue, I have recently started to use the CoC rules that have been gathering dust on my bookshelf since July. They've gone down extremely well with my players, who clamour for more. Indeed, it is beginning to usurp VRQ, and FRP in general, as my favourite game system. There are some points I'm like to make about it.

Firstly, as I mentioned in a comment to Daniel James in TF3, the stat SAN isn't really what it says. It really represents stability. I'm therefore preparing to change this in my game, thus having two stats related to sanity, STA and SAN. STA is basically SAN under a different name. I am however undecided as to what SAN should be. I'm currently of the opinion that this stat should rise and fall with treatment and failed STA rolls respectively. On the other hand, SAN could be fairly constant, acting mainly as a guide or aid to the player's roleplaying.

Secondly, this game appears to promote real roleplaying on its own, minimising player effort. This is I think at least partly due to the fact that it is very nearly modern day, and it is correspondingly easier for the players to interact with societies that much more familiar to them.

Aargh!! More on this next ish, as I'm tired, and I want to post this tomorrow. It's also getting a bit garbled. Nextish should also contain The Brockford Files, part 2, and a bit about magick.

TALES FROM THE NORTHERN WOODS No. 2

Jenny Hein's interim zine, 10/72 George St, Norwood, 5067, South Australia

This is being put in now in a desperate bid to make no. 99. I need to put the comments in now to avoid 101 and otherwise they won't appear until 102 (don't ask). If this is 102, you'll know I didn't make it.

COMMENTS 98 (Love the cover)

LEE: Australia is full of non-Christians. It's just that 'Christian name' is so much a part of the vocabulary, no one bothers about getting technical. I also have to avoid 'first name' as I deal with a lot of Asians at work and that means their family name to them. Don't ask me what they make of (Christain name), but I haven't had any bother so far.

S. FRITZ (via M. WIXTED): Where do you keep your propeller???

D. DICK (re Dwarves): I've got it! Dwarves are wombats in disguise!

RANDOM TRIVIA: Wombats are South Australia's animal symbol.

J. BURT: I forgot to comment on you lastish. I meant to, but you somehow slipped off my list. Hopefully the comments from then appear below.//Do you sing well? I may well be tempted to join in your songs on S. FRITZ'S PBZ if I know the songs. But I think we'll be too busy talking to sing, especially if you're as funny as your letters.//(re me) I don't know if Tasmania ever applied for statehood in the U.S. but they've been threatening for years to secede from the mainland. We've gotten use d to it.

M. GALEOTTI (re me): How can I claim originator's rights to something I swiped out of folk lore? I found that bit on living metals when I was researching the Philosopher's Stone and liked the idea. The bit on dwarves was mine, but you can have it. (I demand a share in the royalties though.)

DEPARTMENTAL GRAFFITTI: "Be realistic. Demand the impossible!"

A. McINTOSH (re me): What do we need a vocal range table for? For the fun of it! The only time I remember it coming into play was when 3 Elven Bards had a jam session in the middle of the inn and it was nice to know the voices worked. (A tenor, contralto and soprano) We made a bit of money out of that too.

This is being typed without aid of any confu, so please accept my apologies for the mistakes. Now you know how many I usually make!

A write-up of the Adelaide con will be coming soon (I hope). I also discovered that there are cons in Melbourne and Sydney Canberra so you may have more Aussie write-ups. With a bit of luck I'll get to the January one in Canberra.

Stuff to fill the spaces: SEA DRAGON

AC: 1

Move 3"/15"

HD: 12-14 (2 per head + 3-10)

No of attacks:2

Intelligence: Low

Size: L (30'long)

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Damage/attack: 2-20/2-20

The sea dragon is not a real dragon, but is known as such because of its size and shape. It is a greeny-olive colour and has two heads. It cannot fly, but as implied by the name, it is found in most remote and deep seas. It is unable to converse in any language but its own. Each has a cave located on the sea bed where its treasure (Type z?) is kept. It is able to breathe both above and below water and if an encounter is going against it, the sea dragon will dive under the sea to escape. It can capsize averaged sized boats (50%) and percentages otherwise vary according to size. It is impervious to cold-based attacks. They resent any intrusion into their territory and will attack immediately. Special attacks are by spurling water from their mouths - the normal method of attack.

Wes thu hal!

Fire in the Morning--part four

(c) 1984, Phillies

"So," Pamela concluded, "the traps were hidden inside Kronor's blocks. They went off when I traced the key memory."

(Oh, please!) interrupted Cameron. (Structures inside a block? That's impossible.) "Miss Morgan, you've made quite enough trouble for me. I suppose you also claim that the native, who had no psi talent of his own, knocked out Smythe while his shields were up? Only you could have done that. Not Kronor! You! You! I don't know what your game is, but I'll find out. Now, go away! I have enough headaches already!)

(Cameron!) Pam held her contact with him tightly focused, keeping Mumford unaware of her message. (I found out what planted the blocks. Nuzeem! There's a Nuzeem grove on Naseby, in seed phase. Its position--)

(Spare me!) he answered. (Even most children half your age have more sense than to try to cover an exposed lie with another one. Just go away, little girl. Go away!)

Startled by Cameron's hostility, Pam backed through the doorway. She had quarreled with the TPC before, but Cameron was thinking of her as a dangerous criminal, if not as an enemy of the Confederation. He hadn't even listened when she mentioned the Nuzeem. That was a real crisis to which his mind was closed.

She would have to deal with the Nuzeem by herself, assuming that she could. The last time she had encountered one, it had nearly killed her. Of course, she told herself, she had been much younger then. Her shields hadn't really been proof against the more lethal psi wavelengths in the Nuzeem attacks. Still, a Nuzeem was not something she wanted to tackle by herself. What other choice did she have? The Nasebonian Hierarchate denied the existence of psionics. If she did nothing, the native population would be slaughtered. She had spent the past few years minding her own business, choosing not to use psi to help others, but that couldn't go on forever.

Late night. The starfire of the cluster dominated the northern sky. On the bow promenade deck, Pam settled back in a couch. She had found a place sheltered from the thoughts of the other passengers, so she could concentrate without anyone disturbing her.

Mother was still awake, hammering out details of diplomatic negotiations. Pam had announced where she was going. Mother nodded, exactly as though her well-brought-up, nine-year-old daughter were still with her. Pam had a portable law library under one arm. If Mother thought that Pam spent the wee hours reading something desirable rather than theoretical physics, that was Mother's problem.

Nuzeem and human minds could communicate on a limited range of topics. Mutual incomprehension was more normal. Pam reached out, calling, projecting the Nuzeem neutral sign of greetings. Psi didn't depend on range, not in any ordinary way, but for the Nuzeem to find her, she had to be conspicuous. She knew where they were, but didn't want them to know that she knew. So they had to find her. The Nuzeem symbolism was a tag, something they couldn't overlook. She waited, staring up into the cloudless sky.

(Who?) came an answer. (Who? Who? Whowhohboo?) The alien voices grated and rumbled, obscuring all sense of their direction.

(Friend. Peace-friend. End-of-time-friend) she answered. She had used those symbols elsewhere, to persuade other Nuzeem that she was not their enemy, that their millennia-long war with the Others had ended. She told them of the Confederation, of Nuzeem groves elsewhere. The constellations made their slow wheel through the

heavens....Later, much later, she ended her story. She stood and touched her toes.

(So you are not the Others,) came the toneless answer. Grove-thoughts flitted about her, out of synchrony with a human sense of time. Gingerly, she opened some of her private memories to them. This was a risky step. If they disbelieved her, they might attack while her shields were weakened.

(A human does not have Masters,) they commented. (No Masters? Then who is he who waits and watches in secret silent deep?) They followed with a sense of position and duration. Someone had been spying on her, someone who knew she was so involved that his presence could pass unnoticed.

"Cameron," she called.

(Master?) came alien questioning. (Your Master?)

(No!) she answered. "Cameron, I don't have time for games. It's hard enough to negotiate--it's hard enough to keep in phase with Nuzeem minds--without your making trouble."

(Oh please, little girl,) he answered mentally, clearly audible to the listening Nuzeem. (You killed a prisoner. You knocked out one of my best operatives. And now you pretend to negotiate with a restricted species which actually isn't found within thirty parsecs of here. Over the years, you've done quite enough harm. This is the last straw. If you won't grow up, we'll just change you, you little monster. I've read your files. I know all about you.)

"Cameron, show some slight sense," she whispered. "You know perfectly well what else is listening to us."

"Nothing." (How naive do you think I am anyway?) He pulled a stun-gun from his jacket pocket. She dove for the corner of a bulkhead.

What a trap, she thought. If she used psi against him, the Nuzeem would type her as a violent warrior, one of the Others. If she didn't she would soon be Cameron's prisoner.

(Monster, he said!) chanted the unseen watchers. (Monster! Monster! An Other Monster, as we were warned! Kill the Other Monsters! Kill! Kill! Killlllllll!)

Cameron's first burst took her in the chest; a second caught her legs. Her internal pain blocks flared. She collapsed to the deck. Her head and shoulders had reached the wall just before he fired. She barely clung to consciousness, then let her shields relax, allowing the slightest trickle of confused thought to escape. With some luck, Cameron wouldn't suspect she was awake.

She could hear the Nuzeem reaction. They were working themselves into a frenzy. (No!) she told them, fiercely; (we are not the Others!) Cameron's mind-probes draped over her like a wet blanket, searching for gaps in her screens, forcing her to break contact with the Nuzeem.

There were footsteps on the deck around her. Several pairs of hands lifted her into a pallet. It wobbled and floated upwards. Someone thoughtfully wedged her law library under her feet. The very tight, very potent, inwards-facing psi barriers of the stretcher flickered into place. She couldn't, she found, push a thought through them, at least not without being conspicuous. She couldn't move and didn't dare open her eyes.

Pam heard the voice of one of Cameron's guards. "Optical deflectors engaged, sir! Lifting away. We broke the rail, arranged for witnesses to their unfortunate demise, and weren't observed, sir."

"Orders, sir?" Another male voice, one Pam didn't recognize. Where was she? Optical deflectors? Lifting? Their--my?--tragic end?--she asked herself. What was going on? The sounds and the bright lights beyond her eyelids didn't make sense.

to be continued nextish

by Steve Jones, 307, Gillott Rd, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B16 0RT, England.

COMMENTS 98

STEVE GILHAM I am not Adrian Joseph, I have never been Adrian, and I have no intension of becoming Adrian at any time in the foreseeable future. // I believe the reason for the Eternally Dead Dragonewt was the phenomenon Robert Clifford complains of: NPCs exist only to be killed/ripped off by PCs, and should never be played intelligently.

WILSON HEYDT Adrian's title is from the apocryphal tale of a woman who used to wash her poodle and then dry it in the oven. When she got a microwave oven she tried the same trick, and the dog exploded! She sued the manufacturers and won because the operating instructions did not specifically state "Do NOT use to dry dogs".

ELLIS SIMPSON I sent DragonLords a review of The Fantasy Herald 1&2, but have heard nothing about it. It was a very favourable review, so Mike Lewis probably thought I was being paid to write it.

RAEBNC- SAPIENZA (TSaR Wars), GOLD (Herbs, Write-ups), BROOKS (Middle Earth), LOUTZENHISER (Shock), JOINER (Elves, Spell Program), GALEOTTI (RuneWizardry), CLARKE (Annecy), STRAUSS (Role-playing), ROBERTSON (Books), HUDELSON (Fangharm).

COMMENTS 97

JASON RAY If you do an article on "balancing Rune Magic", I will do one on "juggling Rune Magic", and then there is this trick of spinning the spells on top of poles (but you need a Ring of Spell Turning to do it).

SCOT FRITZ Adrian Joseph is not currently receiving A&E due to severe financial difficulties. However he wishes to continue the PBZ, and should be sending zines in again any century now. His last orders were: "I will go to the city with the evening contingent. I hope to be somewhere near the middle of the ~~assault team~~ group, as I have no weapons (unless someone would care to lend me one)."

DAVID DUNHAM If a shaman sets a controlled spirit on a dragonewt, the DN cannot disengage because he is embodied. After he is annihilated, the shaman has an intact DN skin and no reprisal. The DN could suicide to ruin the skin and give him a chance to disengage, but nets or Harmonize could be used to stop this. My solution is to rule that the magical abilities of DNSA are derived from the link with the previous owner, and if the DN is destroyed in spirit combat the skin becomes non-magical.

ROB ELLWOOD Excellent piece on Higher-Order Skills.// Is your title derived from the TV series "THE PRISONER"? For those unfortunates who have not seen it, it is about The Village, a prison run along the lines of a holiday camp and guarded by white beachballs 2m across called "Rover", and Number Six, a kidnapped British agent, who would like to know who controls The Village. The obvious ruler of The Village is Number Two, but who gives him orders? Who is Number One? I do not know if it has been shown in Canada, but it is being rerun in England on Channal Four at 10 pm every Monday.

SCOTT TURNER This was one of the best zines of recent issues. I hope everyone notes your definition of metarules, as following it will prevent a lot of the confusion which has surrounded the subject so far.// The following is my rough jottings after discussion with friends as to what makes a game appeal to munchkins: Large hardback books, incomprehensible rules (so they can be altered without doing anything "unofficial"), lots of advertising, TSR logo, all friends are playing particular game, father-figure to provide OTW, game tokens to collect (EPs, GPs, VPs), unkillable characters (or easy raises), stereotyped characters (no need to have personalities), ever escalating power level (orcs one week, trolls the next, then dragons, then gods), which needs random generation from long lists of magic items and monsters, power without responsibility, aimed at 10-14 year old market, believability is not necessary.

RAEBNC 97: PEHR (Elemental Orientation), GILHAM (Technomagic), SAPIENZA (Carla), DIEN (VD&D), FOSTER (Berkserkers), PATTERSON (Fortune Points), D RAY (Koric), J RAY (RQ Altars), PIXLEY (STNF, Spider), DA SILVA (Suenteus Po), GALEOTTI (Alien Mindsets), DAWSON (PraxPak), DUNHAM (RQ).

COMMENTS 99

LEE GOLD: "Sarsaparilla: If berry juice is given to a newborn child, it will never be poisonous." I always thought being poisonous was a survival trait. See Jenny Hein's zine, bottom of page.

JENNY HEIN: DragonQuest has armor weights and costs varying with species.

DAVE NALLE: I agree about Thieves Guilds. Lankhmar had one because Leiber was sending up a city so decadent that even the thieves are shackled by tradition and a rigid guild structure. They have no place in most realistic cities. Besides in A/B/C/D/-ED&D, Thief does not imply criminal; it applies to anyone who can pick locks, sneak around, etc., usually in Gilded Holes. Call them Scouts, and there is no reason for not having a Scouts Guild.//The Dragon received complaints about Gyaxian abuse and replied that as he was the designer "of the two most popular role-playing systems," he could write anything he wanted to. I suppose now he is the "designer of the FOUR most popular roleplaying games." On the other pedipale, I read in ACOLYTE that this year's GAMES DAY Awards had O/B/E/AD&D as separate games and due to the split none of them won! Brownd in their own alphabet soup! The winner was probably RQ or TRAV.

HARRY ROBERTSON: DBG is not as bad as everyone makes out; it is worse. It is an appalling mangling of mythology to stock the 12th level of a zoo dungeon. Even the editor, Lawrence Schick, said it was cr*p as soon as he left TSR. (DW22) As final proof, Lord Gyax has praised it (TD?) and condemned anyone who criticizes "this fine and useful work" to the 241st level of the Abyss (i.e. in with the VD&D players, fanzine editors, Dave Arneson and other ingrates). If you ever see DBG, please remember to wash your brain afterwards (any strong commercial disinfectant will do) to prevent mindrot.//I use International Money Orders as well. As far as I know it is the best system. (ID6 calls of "system snob.")

PAUL MASON: the NZ fanzine GRIM REAPER seemed closer in style to UK zines than to US ones. It has Monsters, Magic Items, and Modules (the Three Deadly Ms), and many of the writers appear to know each other. They poke fun at each other and carry on discussions from other fanzines.

GENERAL: What happened to the British Coup I wondered after reading this issue. I counted pages: Britain 75, US 64, Australia 10. A major coup (50%) for Britain. The trouble was there was such a lot of drivel to fill pages I never noticed it. I will point no accusing fingers; the guilty know who they are. (How glad I am to be on the back page soon to fall off into merciful oblivion.)

RAEBNC 99 GOLD (herbalism, A&E), LEWIS (WQ & IMAGINETM), GILHAM (RQ/Glorantha; Tiphareth), BROOKS&FLIN (Middle Earth), SCHWALL (FTL 2448), MASTERS (TRAV Magic), DAWSON (Mrs. Byrne's Dictionary), TAMLYN (Skill in FRP), DA SILVA (VTFT), JAMES (Planets), LONG (CH xerox, Great CH Debate), MASON (IMAGINETM?, The Head), LARTER (Tess), CORNELIUS (RQ Skills), WIXTED (Roundless Combat), ENGLE (Alien Design), ROBERTSON (TRAV Skills), WEBB (Magic: An Occult Design).

NYSALOR/GBAJI RIDDLES (If you don't want to be illuminated, stop reading here)

SPOT HIDDEN What can you see that Yelm cannot? A shadow.

LISTEN What follows the cart which does not do any good to the cart, and for lack of which the cart will not go? The noise that it makes.

DAGGER ATT What is the best way to a troll's heart? Underneath the ribs.

"We want information. Information!"

"You won't get it."

CRITICAL/SPECIAL/FUMBLE CHECKS: In RQ2, the combat rules have special sub-rules to handle additional effects for especially low or high rolls on the D100. The rule is that a critical success requires rolling within 5% of the skill rating; a special success within 20%; and a fumble within 5% of the failure odds. These are handled by a table that tells you what numbers correspond to what percentages at given skill ratings, of 1-100.

It's a nuisance to be constantly checking a table, it seems to me, which is why I provided spaces to record the current odds on the RQ2 character sheets. However, I understand the RQ3 character sheet won't have such spaces, because Chaosium's players don't mind having to look things up occasionally. They found they acquired a sense for that with experience playing the game.

Having failed to persuade them on that point, I have acquired a new enthusiasm for using Difficulty Dice in RQ for this. Take three differently-colored D20s (I use a red and a white for the D100 and a blue for the Difficulty Die) and roll them together every success roll with a skill. On a successful D100 roll, a DD roll of 01-04 means a special success (=20%); an 01 means a critical success (=5%). Why does this work? Because mathematically the third die acts as a mechanical multiplier, applying the percentage checks to the skill rating. On a failed D100 roll, a DD roll of 20 (=5%) means a fumble. The advantage of this system is that it frees you forever of the odds table.

This uses the "low is good" approach, which is logical with a percentage skill system. We can go either way, however, now that the critical/special/fumble determination has been divorced from the skill roll itself. In fact, we can now go to a "high is good" system if we want. Since a D100 roll anywhere in your skill rating is a success, we could turn the DD ratings around, so a 1 with a failure on the D100 means a fumble, while a 17-20 with a successful D100 roll means a special and a 20 means a critical success. The mathematical result is the same.

SKILL VS SKILL OPPOSITION: the DD can also be used in a skill vs skill comparison. If you accept my argument in TRW 11 that luck plays a part in resolving the result when both attacker and defender "succeed" in their D100 rolls, then RQ combat can be speeded up considerably, I believe. Instead of having endless rounds of "I hit, you parry, so I don't hit," we have a comparison of how well each side's skill attempt succeeded: represented by how well the DD roll went. If you use a "high is good" approach, then the higher roll wins when both succeeded on the D100 success roll.

The other approach is not to use the DD for the skill vs skill comparison but rather to use the D100 roll. I prefer this approach, because it keys the comparison to both the roll and the skill level. Using a "roll high" design, the character with a higher skill has a better chance of success and simultaneously better odds that the success roll will land higher than someone in opposition with a lower skill rating.

The net result of these changes to RQ is to end up with what appears to be a faster resolution of combat and other skill vs skill situations. It also allows us to switch to a consistent preference for high numbers, since you want high numbers in all other die rolls in the game (e.g. characteristics generation and damage rolls). Consistency is something I favor because it is more elegant design, absent functional reasons for a different rule. Note that this system is for cases with active opposition to a skill attempt, which occurs most often in combat but does have other applications. Against passive opposition, the Resistance Table still works nicely.

The above has little that's news but restates recent discussions and comments in a more organized form. Thanks to those who contributed ideas to this in past issues. This approach can be carried still another step. In a recent issue of WHITE DWARF, someone suggested that the RQ shield is overrated in armor protection. A quite ordinary small shield has an armor rating higher than the best plate armor. That is, on a successful parry, a small shield subtracts more points of damage from the hit than plate armor does, which the author felt was excessive. I believe the purpose of the rule was to simulate deflection of blows, so only a really powerful blow would penetrate a successful shield parry. Still, perhaps there is another and more satisfactory way of simulating deflection.

Let's cut shields' armor ratings substantially, until they are rated according to the construction like armor design. Note that this has more to do with what the shield is made from than with its actual size. Shield parry skill has to do with your ability to interpose the shield against a blow. Thus shield size affects base ability to parry (the larger it is, the easier), and shield design affects the shield's absorption of force from a blow. And it is the combination of material density plus size that produces the shield's net encumbrance.

For simplicity, let's keep shield sizes as small, medium, and large. This pertains to base parry ability vs melee weapons at perhaps +10%, +20%, and +30% to learned skill and the character's parry bonus. It also means they work for 1-3 hit locations respectively vs missiles. But the amount of protection points and corresponding ENC depends on the shield's material. A large wicker shield is relatively light and gives only light protection, while a small metal shield is relatively heavy and gives heavy protection but to a smaller area.

I'm not interested in going into fine points of shield construction and materials. Let's rate them by relative density of material for simplicity, and say light is 2 pts of protection as armor against a blow, medium is 4 pts, and heavy is 6 pts. For shorthand notations, I'd suggest using size as a letter and density as pts, so a small metal shield would be S6 and a large light shield would be L2. Anybody who wants to apply these principles to a matrix of density vs size is welcome to do so, of course.

All right, what's all this leading up to? What's the point to these changes? I propose to redefine the parry into degrees of success. If the defender gets a D100 success roll that exceeds the attacker's D100 success roll (assuming both roll within their skill ratings), you have a deflection parry. This means no damage is taken, subject to a rule of reason on what is being used to parry what. (A rapier won't deflect a giant's club.) If both roll within their skill ratings but the attacker's roll is higher (or ties), you have a blocking parry, with the shield acting as a layer of armor, subtracting its armor rating; the rest of the blow carries through to the appropriate hit location and its own armor, if any, exactly as in the current rules. If you use rules for armor damage, apply them to the shield in this case too. If the defender fails his parry roll, of course, ignore it, and there is no parry effect at all.

What about weapon parries? The same rule applies: a deflection parry prevents any damage. A blocking parry is effectively bypassed while somewhat slowed. I suggest deducting one point for a dagger parry, two points for other 1H weapons, and three points for a 2H weapon parry. The design goal here is that weapon parry will work but is not as effective as a medium or heavy shield parry.

You have probably already noticed that this proposal doesn't fit neatly into the overall system on page one. Instead of having a yes/no result, it has an intermediate stage. This is to simulate how the parry actually works. A true fencing

parry is basically a yes/no result--you either push the other weapon aside or don't. The allowance of a few points off for weapon parries above was a concession to possible complaints that the shield was being favored too much. Actually (I LOVE MY SHIELD). I think that for weapon parries it is asatisfactory simulation to say you must either roll a deflection parry or fail to parry, period.

With a shield, on the other hand, you really have a double-duty situation. The shield is a deflecting device, if used skillfully and with luck it will simply displace the incoming weapon. But even if the weapon lands, if it lands first on the shield, some of the blow will be absorbed by the shield. So for shield parries, this system simulates two degrees of success.

Rerating shields' armor capacity does two things. First, it separates deflection from armor functions, so instead of combining them in one large and seemingly inappropriate number, we have shields that correspond in armor numbers to the normal range of armor types. Second, it insures that when the attacker rolls better than the defender, the shield won't automatically absorb all the damage. It will give helpful protection, but nothing like the 8/12/16 pts in the current rules.

The problem that nags here is whether these 2/4/6 pt ratings may still be too high. On the one hand, you need decent values for the shield vs missiles, with RQ making the shield effectively another layer of armor over certain hit locations instead of an active parry. On the other hand, the overall system here calls for handling master vs master combat by overriding successful parry rolls with even more successful attack rolls. By giving full success to deflection parries, we greatly increase defense as compared with the current rules, so the other side must be substantially reduced to compensate.

This is not playtested, so I don't have a good feel for balancing it. It might be a better design to have no point subtraction for weapon parries on blocking parries (which would thus become failed or evaded parries, in effect) and cut the shield pt reduction down to 1/2/3 pts. But I don't think it gives a decent simulation of a shield's effectiveness as armor. (Remember that the Greeks used shields and no armor to speak of.) So I would be interested in hearing how people like playtesting a system of shield ratings that parallel armor pt ratings, with the best equivalent to plate and scaled down from there for lighter materials.

This admittedly gives a compromise. But it seems a reasonable compromise between those who think a parry should work absolutely and those who think that isn't necessarily the best approach. Remember that the underlying problem is the fight between the masters with attack and parry at 90%+. This means there will be net hit odds of 9%, because the parry@ 90% almost always blocks the attack in RQ2. This may be realistic but it's also boring and time-consuming. I am looking for a compromise here between realism and reasonable playability. The proposed system gives absolute parry success part of the time and a likelihood of taking some damage on a "successful" parry the rest of the time. Only extensive playtesting would show if it's a better approach, and that I am unable to give it. I hope someone out there will do so and report back his/her experience and conclusions.

Having to roll within skill rating but on the high end of it should help guard against the trained dice problem, but not true TK. Trained dice could also be crooked by making the critical and fumble both occur on the same 20 result, depending on whether the D100 roll succeeded or failed. This would eliminate the RQ Dice vs the D&D dice situation, I think. I have been using a Dragonbone instead of dice, which means I don't have the convenience of adding the Difficulty Die as part of the success roll by rolling three instead of two dice. Instead I simply leave the DB on the D100 setting and push the button twice: first for success; second to see if I get 1-20 for a special success or 1-5 for a critical/fumble. That's using the straight percentages that the rule is based on, after all.

THE ICELANDIC COUP ISSUE

THE SAGA OF HERVOR (part VI)

It happened one summer that King Heithrek took his army south into Hunland and fought against the king that was called Humli. He won and took Humli's daughter Sifka home with him. But the next summer he sent her home. She was pregnant. Her son was given the name Hlothr and was the handsomest of men. He was fostered by Humli, his grandfather.

Chapter SEVEN: The Queen's Treachery

One summer King Heithrek took his army into Saxland. When the king of the Saxons got news of this, he invited him to a feast and asked him to take whatever he wanted from his lands. King Heithrek accepted this. There he saw his daughter, beautiful and fair. Heithrek asked for this maiden, and she was given him. Then the feast was extended to celebrate. After that King Heithrek went home with his wife, taking a pretty fair amount of wealth with her. King Heithrek had become a great warrior and expanded his kingdom in many ways. His wife often asked for permission to visit her father, and that was allowed her. With her went Angantyr, her step-son.

One summer when King Heithrek was on a raid, he came to Saxland, the kingdom of his father-in-law. He moored his ship in a secluded inlet and went ashore with one man. Around nightfall they arrived at the king's estate and headed for the room where Heithrek's wife was accustomed to sleep. None of the sentries was aware of their coming. Heithrek entered the room and saw a man sleeping with his wife. The man had fair hair. The man with the king said he had taken blood-vengeance for far more trifling matters.

He answered, "I will not do that now."

The king took the boy Angantyr, who was lying in another bed. He also cut a great lock of hair from the man sleeping in his wife's arms. Once he had both hair and boy, he returned to his ship. The next day the king put into anchorage. Everyone went to meet him, and a great feast was prepared.

Heithrek then had an assembly summoned. Great news was told to him, that Angantyr his son had died suddenly. Heithrek said, "Show me the body."

The Queen said it would only increase his sorrow. He was nonetheless led to the burial place. There they found a dog wrapped up in cloth. King Heithrek said, "My son has not changed for the better if he has become a dog."

The king then had the boy conducted to the assembly and said that he had proved the great treachery of the queen, and explained the entire incident, asking that all men be summoned to the assembly there. And when a great multitude of people had come, the king said, "The blond, curly-haired fellow has not yet come."

He was then sought for, and a man was found in a kitchen with his head all bound up. Many wondered why he should be allowed at the assembly, being a slave of the most wretched degree. And when he arrived at the assembly, King Heithrek said, "Here you may now see the one that the king's daughter would rather have than me." He then took the lock and compared it with the man's hair. It was a perfect match.

"But you, king, have always been good to us, and for that reason your kingdom will be left in peace by us, but I will not keep your daughter any longer." Heithrek went home with his son.

One summer King Heithrek sent men into Russia. Their mission: to ask for a son of the king of Russia for him to foster. He now wanted to try to go against everything his father had counselled. The emissaries arrived at the King of Russia's court, conveying him their business and a message of friendship. The King said that there wasn't a snowball's chance in hell that he would give his son away for fostering by a man he'd heard so many ill reports of.

Then the queen said, "Don't speak like that, lord; you have heard how great a man he is and how victorious. It would be wiser to accept this honor graciously, for otherwise your kingdom will not remain in peace."

The king said, "You exert great influence on this."

The boy was handed over to the emissaries, and they returned home. King Helthrek received the boy well and gave him a good upbringing. He came to love him dearly.

Sifka Humli's daughter was then back with the king, but he was advised that if he had secrets he wanted to keep, she was the last to tell them to.

NEXT TIME: an expedition to Russia

COMMENTS (A&E #92)

JOHN SAPIENZA (TGD 49): Your "Is Rolegaming a Social Activity" raises many important questions about FRP. After looking at your essay, however, I believe some of my answers to these questions would differ from yours.

Balancing roleplaying vs social considerations is something I must do in my own campaign. I suppose the same applies to all GMs. And while rolegaming is a social activity for me too, it is also something more. My deepest pleasure in RPGs comes not from the socializing but from roleplaying a character in a realistic and exciting game environment. And there are times when creating and sustaining this realistic game environment means roleplaying considerations must take precedence over social ones.

The problem with the group adventure format that prevails in FRP today is that it eliminates many potentially exciting plot elements from the game. Many, in fact, most good fantasy or adventure stories, for example, make considerable use of situations in which one or more characters are separated from the main group. What would be left of The Hobbit if one extracted all the private adventures from it? Almost everything Bilbo does in that book is a private adventure of one sort or another (e.g. his encounter with Gollum, the trolls, and Smaug; the riddle game, his freeing the dwarves from the spiders and from an elvish dungeon; his theft of the Arkenstone and his negotiation with the Lakemen/elves). Private adventures play an important role in LotR too. Referees and players who insist on a group adventure format are thus preventing RPGs from simulating some of the most exciting situations in fantasy literature.

There are other reasons I feel the private adventure has a place in FRP. Skills, for example, belong to individuals, not groups. When a player has a right to certain information because of a special ability, he has a similar right to disseminate it to the group in a manner and at a time of his own choosing (including not at all, if he so chooses). This puts the focus on the character, where it should be, and not on the referee. It is also far more realistic. If you were in a group that encountered a 6HD tract on corporation law, for example, the group would not suddenly acquire an understanding of it just because you were in the vicinity. You would have to summarize and explain it to them; and in the process, you would have the option of misleading them, if that were your wish.

I think the game is much better for giving you that option. Whether you are chaotic evil or lawful good, doing it this way gives you a chance to roleplay your alignment.

Private adventures also give quiet or shy players much more chance to express themselves. Even though as a referee I try hard to make sure quiet players get the voice they deserve in party decisions, there are times, often in the heat of battle, when they get overlooked. In a party with a highly vocal, experienced, and aggressive player, quiet people often lose out. Giving them the option of going off on their own helps remedy this. If individual players regularly feel compelled to go off on "private adventures," then possibly the fault does not lie with the private

adventures or referee so much as with the group itself. There are times when a private adventure can be a much-needed protest against the domination of the group by the loud.

And when it's the loud themselves who wander off on their own, this often gives people back at the camp a chance to assert themselves. Many times I've been amazed and deeply moved at the tremendous potential my quieter players have revealed when the louder group leaders were off on some private adventure.

As a referee, I like the possibility of private adventure because it adds more options to an encounter situation. It permits frightened characters to flee the monsters while others battle on (far more realistic than the wooden army ant style tactics one sees in most games). Often those who flee wind up in far deeper trouble than if they had stuck things out. If I had to tailor my encounters so all party members could participate in all possible dealings with them, I would be running a hack and slash campaign.

Allowing private adventures makes many small monsters viable that would be useless pitted against a group. What use is a lone goblin or wolf or a small pack of wild dogs in a world in which players exist only in increments of five or more? Similarly, there are lots of simple traps, potentially lethal against individuals, that are little more than a joke against a group.

As for your example of the two orc-hunting fighters, I'm afraid my sympathies would lie with the fighters, though I can appreciate your group's distress. Such incidents occur in almost every session I've ever run of my game. To me, using the referee to force the two players back from orc-chasing would inflict a major external distortion on the game environment. If your players really don't like it, then their PCs should do something about it, provided they have grounds for it in the game context.

I suspect part of the reason for my difficulty with your position is that we seem to be operating from two totally different sets of playing ethics. The one cardinal rule that governs all my RPG activity is that players should never, under any circumstances, take personal offense at what a character does. There should never be any negative cross-over between the level of the player and that of the character. I feel it is very wrong to allow anything a character does, whether evil, chaotic or just plain stupid, to affect one's personal relations with the player in any way. Conversely, real world friendships/animosities should have no influence on the relations among the characters.

To my mind, when a character does something objectionable, there is only one appropriate level on which to respond: the character level. The problem you describe often comes up in my campaign, partially because I tend to encourage a more individualistic style of play. When some rash young hothead wants to stir up an orc-den at night or does something else sure to bring all hack crashing down on the party's collective head, my players don't try to ban the offender from the campaign. No, they react on the character level, which is far more realistic and satisfying to all concerned, generally. They restrain the character, with fire and sword, if need be.

In my Winnipeg campaign, one player had great fun playing a rash and arrogant young warrior, who got the party in dutch many times by sassing high-powered NPCs. To stop that, two PCs formed the "brotherhood of the spear," which meant they wapped him up the side of the head with an ashen spear-butt whenever he looked like starting trouble. It usually worked. In time the character modified his behavior. It worked out quite well this way. The threat to the party was handled at the character level where it belonged, not by applying external pressure totally outside the game context. And instead of the tremendous hurt feelings that would result from being banned or thrown out of the game, I think both sides became more understanding of the other's position. The hothead realized the long term implications of his action, and the brothers of the spear, I think, came to enjoy his roleplaying somewhat, even if it kept their hands full (of ashen spear-butts, at least).

On this point I really have to disagree with your comment to Ozzie Fontacchio/John Prentis in A&E 87. I believe one can do other things besides putting up or banishing people who play rash (or incompatible-by-reason-of-alignment) characters. Any

party that thinks itself worthy of fighting monsters, traps, and 17th level wizards should have enough coercive devices at its disposal to handle one or two such characters. If not, well, it's in the wrong line of work.

If you have a problem with rash fighters, tie them up for the night. If you're lucky, the ref may cooperate and hit your camp with an orc-raid that night. Anyone who's sat, bound and immobile, while a melee raged over, around and through them will think twice about meriting such punishment again, if they survive. Or knock them out. Beat them up. Or spells--there must be dozens applicable here. Or if all else fails, kill them. Such would be perfectly plausible in the context of the sort of adventure situations you were describing. Any member of my party who endangered all of us on a regular basis through hotheadedness and tomfoolery would find death the least of his punishments.

The same applied to chaotic or just plain mischievous PCs. I remember one such, one of the best roleplayers I've known, who had a habit of dodging the party's treasure division scheme by pocketing stuff on the sly. He also liked to remove small but valuable (and sacred) items from elvish holy barrows when the party was passing through elflands under very tense conditions. After awhile, it got to the point where he would be bound and skin-searched at the first sound of a jingle, which--in an Icelandic winter in a campaign where characters can die from pneumonia--is no joke.

The note-passing style of FRP was very popular in Nova Scotia at one time. Its original intention, I believe, was to allow for a certain amount of limited intelligence without going to the extreme of the private adventure format. I'm sorry to hear it's not your cup of tea. In the games I observed at least, the note-passing did nothing whatsoever to stifle the party atmosphere. Why should it? Players were still free to talk weather, politics, last night's hockey match, even the game if they wanted to.

While it does sound like the Able-Baker-Charlie scenario suffered from some very basic problems, I'm not sure I would blame it on the use of notes in the game. And I still think note-passing games have considerable advantages over the alternatives you mentioned. Note-passing, whatever else one says about it, is still a lot faster than mail. As for computers, what about those cave-dwelling hermits who don't have one or, worse still, don't want one? I for one find pushing plastic buttons on a machine a poor substitute for face-to-face interaction with a living GM.

To be sure, in those private adventure or note-passing games I've seen, both were aberrations on the main flow of the game. The referee was always ready to resume a group adventure format, if and when the players got back together. It is just that he did not force this and was prepared to handle it if the group decided to split up at some later point as well.

Campaigns that allow for action independent of the main group have a certain unpredictability that appeals greatly to me. This unpredictability can be reflected in many ways. If nothing else, it forces the player to think more, to pay more attention to his self-sufficiency and viability as an independent unit. If he knows he can't always depend on being together with the guy who has the torches, the holy water, or the 30-die lightning bolt wand, it will be reflected in everything from his equipment purchases to his spell selection to his stance on treasure division.

As a corollary to that, the potential for backstabs within the ranks of PCs is something that always appeals to me. It just makes that ultimate evil wizard/demon/TSR executive we're fighting seem so much more credible and so much tougher. It never ceases to amaze me, on worlds where the group-unity rule is an iron fetter, how inept these superpowerful evil entities are, so clueless that they can't even infiltrate one spy into our ranks or so tactless that they can't even corrupt one member of a party of chaotic evil PCs into their service. To me, the element of treachery makes the roleplaying situation much more plausible and enjoyable.

To be sure, I sympathize with your irritation at being out of the action for such a long period of time. Players have expressed similar sentiments in my games, which feature a high frequency of private adventures, as noted earlier. In the three

years I ran my Old Norse campaign in Winnipeg, the private adventure option was put to a vote many times. The overwhelming majority of my twelve or so regular players always voted for it. In fact, most of the votes for it were unanimous.

In my experience, there are ways to limit the disruption caused by private adventures short of banning them altogether. The best of these involve the use of multiple referees. It is strange how little mention there is of this in A&E. Multiple referees allow for a far more sophisticated scenario than the conventional lone-referee format.

Or if the players simply need something to do for awhile, why not have them generate NPCs, monsters, traps, etc. for later use in the campaign? I've gotten some of my most interesting encounters this way. It's not a perfect substitute for playing, granted, but it gives players something game-related to do and keeps the party atmosphere going too.

Referees using lesser known or unpublished systems can always let players look at the rules while they are out running private adventures. Or perhaps there's a book of lore they can examine or a historical background for their characters, country, etc.

Some games feature functions that can be run by the players in the absence of the referee, like spell research, training, enchanting. Occasionally these can be undertaken while a private adventure is underway.

And as someone else has mentioned, there's nothing to stop the referee from interrupting the private adventure to return to the same group, to keep the two (or more) bands in the same time period.

In the end, of course, the matter of private adventures, note-passing, etc. should be up to the people who play the game. If the majority of players are against the private adventure format, period, they should find a referee of like mind. As with any profound difference in playing style or ethic, the newcomers should respect the will of the majority. In many Nova Scotian FRP campaigns, for example, it would be quite disruptive (and thus improper) to roleplay a lawful/good character as it would interfere with the chaotic/evil activities that are the basis of play there. I would be the last to deny your group has every right to ban any form of play it doesn't like, be it chaos, law or simple individualism. By cutting out private adventures, though, I think they are missing out on what can be a very interesting part of the game. For me at least, the added realism and expanded options private adventure format provide more than compensate for any temporary suspension in the flow of play.

MASON JONES (FTBE): Re exchange rates in FRP, for a medieval world I wouldn't bother. I can't recall any mention of exchange in the sources I've read. Medievals, if they had coins at all, were usually more concerned about the quality and quantity of trade metal in them than what country they came from. Presumably most would stick to what they knew, though, and shun the unknown. But constructing a whole exchange system out of this would be more trouble than it's worth, in my opinion, if one were trying to simulate a medieval world.

SCOTT BAUER: Re game generations: I'd prefer a scheme which is more or less chronological. Thus I'd make D&D first generation, T&T and EPT second generation (both are direct descendants of D&D, and C&S, RQ, Arduin Grimoire and TFT third generation games, insofar as they were influenced by D&D and one or more of the second generation games. AD&D and Dragonquest I would class as fourth generation games, as both are products of an FRP hobby that has been heavily influenced by the previous three generations. My own game I would class as a third generation, as its basic concepts were established before I knew of RQ, C&S, etc.

RANDALL S. STUKEY: Do not agree with your call for regular reviewers in the prozines. A good review will reveal a great deal about the reviewer's taste in any event; thus the benefit from appointing a permanent one is slight. Having a variety of reviewers in a prozine helps get a much wider variety of games reviewed. The problem with staff reviewers is that when they refuse to review your game, that's it. With a

variety of free-lancers there is a greater chance one will take enough interest in your title to write about it. The journals I read regularly (on vikings, sagas and Norse mythology) feature book reviews from a wide variety of people, not a long regular review columnist.

COMMENTS A&E #94

ROBERT PLAMONDON (015): Greatly enjoyed your writings. Can't say I agree with your definition of Lawful and Chaotic, though. To me a Lawful is someone who believes in the rule of Law. This has several implications. Most important of these is that for the rule of Law to be viable, it has to be possible for men to obey that law. For example, people have to be given the chance to know what the law is. (How can one consciously obey something one doesn't know of?) It has to be possible for men to obey the law. Last but not least, laws cannot be made retroactive.

That is why the totalitarian regimes so often named as "lawful" in A&E are practically the opposite. The Nazis and the Communists were, in fact, the epitome of anti-Lawfulness (or Chaos, if you will). They worked against the rule of law, by flagrantly disregarding their own laws and constitutions. They imposed laws which were physically impossible for men to obey (such as Nazi policy which made it effectively illegal to be of Jewish descent). They were also into retroactive laws which by definition are impossible to obey (one can't obey something that doesn't exist). They worked against the rule of law, replacing it with fiat and terror. That is not Lawful, by any definition.

Found your guidelines to combat rule design very interesting. Right on about the importance of minimizing combat tables (my game has none). As for damage range of weapons, in my world this ranges from no effect to death, though I do not use a critical hit table or the other methods you cite.

LEW WOLKOFF (IWAL9MUFTICA): Enjoyed your Princecon VIII write-up very much.

COMMENTS: A&E #95

JOHN M. BURT (MsFIKBL0): re ct to PATTERSON: I think you're being a little hard on giants. In Old Icelandic tradition at least, there are some pretty smart giants (though plenty of stupid ones too, I admit). The story of Thor's visit to Utgarth-Loki is worth a read if you're interested in such. Another giant comes pretty close to conning the gods out of the sun, the moon, and Freyja. And as for organization, any monster that can organize the attack that destroys the gods, the world and everything in it has some talents in that direction, I'd say.

MARTIN WIXTED: re ct to ROBERT PLAMONDON: I agree with both of you on the importance of pain in FRP. I remember one PC who incurred a swordscratch in a battle with orcs. He went to a healer. I described in some detail the dressing of the wound, the application of an herbal poultice, and the strange numbness that began to spread through the wound. As the character was of low intelligence and had never been to a healer before, I stressed the strangeness of the experience. He at once assumed he had been poisoned and proceeded to knock the living daylight out of the healer. He was well on the way to wrecking the place (and the healer), when his friends intervened. This was not a reaction he was roleplaying either, but a real outburst of the player's fear, which came from the pain his character was experiencing.

A&E #96 COMMENTS

PETER SHAPLEY: Good points on EP. I always give participants in combat some EP, whether they hit or not. Those who do hit get more, of course.//Re bad luck: that's very important in my campaign. I could send you (or print in A&E) a list of things that were bad luck in the sagas, if you'd like.

CHRIS MURRAY: Greatly enjoyed your "Roleplaying as It Could Be Done." Virgins are the most fun to run by far, I think. You made a very good point in that if players are given a good introduction and the right sort of game-expectations from the beginning, it does a lot for their roleplaying skill. Some of the veteran D&Ders who've come to my campaign have had to unlearn a lot of bad habits before they were able to really get into their roles. They'd lost a certain natural outlook on things that everyone has at the beginning.

ROBERT SAUNDERS: Found your "Magic in FRP Worlds" Intriguing. Think the idea of magic not really working is fascinating. In a sense what you'd be recreating is a real, medieval world, where magic was thought to work but didn't.//Another idea I used to toy with was limiting magic to NPCs only. That would do a great deal to preserve the tremendous aura of mystery magic has in the medieval works I've read. Unfortunately one loses some of this aura when magic is made available to PCs, who learn the system, the whys and wherefores and the limitations of magic. Magic is so much more fun when it is vast, limitless and unknowable. The referee wouldn't have to worry about any sort of magic system either, in that case; he could make his magic as illogical and irrational as he desired. That to me would be real magic. Since it's such fun to play magic-users, though, I imagine few players (or referees) would opt for this idea.

MIKE DAWSON (0013): What you said about roleplaying has needed saying for a long time. I'm not sure socializing and roleplaying are quite as incompatible as you suggest, though. I enjoy very much the type of intense roleplaying you describe, but I think that even an intense role can survive some socializing. It's only when this begins to disintegrate the atmosphere produced by the game situation that it becomes a problem.

Your observation that many confuse goal-achieving with roleplaying is very perceptive. One possible solution is to try to link the goals of the game to good roleplaying. That's what I try to do in my campaign, at least.

EDWARD P. WILSON: Agree with your idea of turning old PCs into NPCs. I carry around about six years worth (about 500). It's a bit heavy, I admit. It's worth it, though, if only for the look on the players' faces when I dump the pile on the table and say, "These are the ones who have failed...."

ALFRED E. PETTINGER: Enjoyed your comments very much.

COMMENTS ON A&E #97

JOHN SAPIENZA (GD 53): Sorry to hear you find inter-character conflict in FRP so offensive. As you note, it poses a question for which there are no neat answers. Though I appreciate your concern for its impact on the game, I must say that some of your observations have not been borne out by my experience. Apparently we are coming from two very different gaming milieux.

I agree that the clash of differing player expectations can produce great tension within the game. We differ in that I fail to see how competitive style is any more inherently anti-social than cooperative style. If anything, I would say the opposite, as cooperation is still very possible within the framework of a competitive game, whereas a cooperative game of the type you describe not only bans competitive play but drastically limits the type of situation or literature the game can simulate. People who would like to relive an adventure out of Tolkien or the sagas, for example, will find their ability to do so far more constrained in a game that forces unity at all costs, if only because inter-character conflict plays an important role in these works. As long as all participants are aware that inter-character conflict is part of the game, there is nothing basically anti-social about it.

In the long run a more effective solution to the tension produced by clashing expectations would be to teach players to be more tolerant of different styles. I agree that being killed by another PC can be a tremendous shock if one does not see this as part of the game. Even then I don't think it is a case of being anti-social, but of two people playing different games, with irreconcilable objectives. On the whole, I think players are better off being prepared for the wider range of events and character relations possible in a competitive game, whatever their own choice of style. I still think it is unhealthy, as I have said before, to express personal animosity to a player (by dropping out or kicking him out of a game) for something his character has done. Granted, one has every right to leave a campaign if one does not enjoy it; and if this lack of enjoyment stems from inter-character conflict, then by all means leave. I think, however, many of those offended by inter-character conflict would profit by reconsidering the source of their irritation.

Is the competitive style equivalent to wargaming or power-gaming? This has not been true of the cases I've observed. Virtually all the power-gaming I've seen has occurred in cooperative games, where the power-tripping was done at the expense of NPCs (mostly defenseless civilians).

In my experience, bossing players around is far more common in cooperative games, if only because there is no recourse for the victim. In a competitive game, if someone tries to boss my PC around, I can always resist with force. In a cooperative game, where even the most obnoxious loudmouth is inviolable, one has to put up or drop out. This hurts everyone in the campaign: oneself, even the loudmouth because if he lost a few PCs that way, he might begin to learn a few things.

In the competitive campaigns I've seen, players who sincerely wished to cooperate were seldom in any danger from other players, no matter how weak. The threat to all posed by a vicious referee is usually incentive enough for collaboration.

Most of the competitive gamers I've seen do not view what they are doing as "wargaming." Many simply find it more stimulating to play a competitive role or enjoy wrestling with a dark fate that brings them into conflict with others. Just as there are some actors who like playing MacBeth, there are some players who like being the bad guy. They are no more anti-social in this than any actor of theatre villains.

What's more, roleplaying a villain well can often be very counter-productive in terms of wargaming objectives, as I'm sure you know. A good villain (as opposed to some psycho who massacres everything in sight) presents just as much a roleplaying challenge as a hero. He can also make an important contribution to that elusive state known as "suspension of disbelief," when the game really comes alive. With that in mind, I'd say hiss and boo the game-Macbeths by all means; thwart them if you can. But ban them from the game? Surely any group that does is the poorer for it.

SCOTT R. TURNER: Thank you for the informative piece on meta-rules. Your zine is quite snappy-looking.

CHILD & UBERMAN: Thank you for the data on wearing Volkswagens.

MARK GALEOTTI: (DD2.5): What's gaming in Iceland like? Fun question. To avoid any misimpressions, I should stress at the outset that I'm Canadian, not Icelandic, and am here in Iceland to get a degree in Icelandic philology plus do research for the Saga Age RPG I am designing. My contacts in Iceland are certainly not all-embracing (far from it), and so it's possible there is certain FRP activity underway here that I don't know about.

Thus far I have uncovered no evidence of any FRP activity in Iceland. Though I don't doubt that some Icelanders have encountered FRP on trips abroad or through interaction with the servicemen stationed at the NATO base in Keflavik, none have managed to get a campaign going here, to the best of my knowledge.

There is some wargaming in Iceland. A stamp, coin and game store sells a few recent Avalon Hill titles, at prices of \$35-50 a copy. According to the proprietor, he sells several games a year to people from Akureyri and Isafjord (a small town in north-western Iceland). Total nation-wide sales last year were on the order of

50-100 games, I believe. The manager of this store travels down to Games Day in Britain and has heard about D&D.

Being a fanatic gamer myself, I have tried to do some FRP missionary work here. At first results were poor. Advertisements I placed at the Student Centre and the games store produced no response. The poor Icelandic on them may have scared people off.

My first campaign in Iceland (the real Iceland, that is; I have been running campaigns set in Saga Age Iceland for over six years now) was not among Icelanders actually, but among a small group of Canadian emigres (plus one token American) here in Reykjavik (for emigres read fellow students in my language course). It was a lot of fun, as games with unspoiled beginners almost always are.

This led to my second campaign here and my first real progress in introducing FRP to Iceland proper. One of the players in my first campaign, Robert Berman, is an English teacher at Hamrahlith High here in Reykjavik. He allowed me to run the game as part of his advanced English course. That was quite the course.

My third campaign began the most strangely. It was in spring when school was out, and I was stuck here waiting for the annual flight to Canada (which leaves in mid-July). Most of the people I knew had left the country. Time was hanging pretty heavy on my hands. I spent most of my time working at my desk in my dorm room. The window of my room looked out on a small patio adjoining the student cafeteria, and in my idle moments I would watch what was going on there. One group of high school students, five or so, used to catch my eye for some reason. They used to play badminton every week on the patio. There was something about them, don't ask me what, that said loud and clear, "These guys are gamers. These guys are gamers." Or potential ones, at least. So one evening I went up to them and said in my best schoolbook Icelandic, "Good day. I am a student from Canada. I am designing a history game about the Old Icelandic sagas. Is much good game. Come to my room and see game, play it maybe?"

I don't know how I'd react if some stranger came out of the blue and asked in broken English if I'd like to go to his room and play a game with him. The students were more understanding though, and in no time at all we were launched into a game of Junta. A couple of weeks later we moved onto FRP, and I became a barbarian referee.

What's a barbarian referee? Well, we're all familiar with the barbarian from comic books, movies, and sword and sorcery, a big dumb guy who can't talk right and does most of his communication through gestures and grunting. Now imagine what sort of a game one gets when the referee is like that. (I'm not so big and we'll make no comment about the dumb part, but when it comes to communication Conan was a Rhodes Scholar compared to me.) What's more, the Icelandic word for foreigner, "utlendingur," literally means "outlander" (the same word used for Conan in the comics here).

Refereeing in a foreign tongue is quite an experience. Naturally I owe a great deal to my players, who have been very patient and understanding. There's really no way I can reproduce in English how awful my Icelandic is, since there are all sorts of potential errors in Icelandic that have no counterpart in our language. In Icelandic, one rolls dice in the dative, something I've never been able to get the hang of. And of course there's no words for the basic concepts of FRP in Icelandic, so we had to create a lot of new words. Worst of all, when the game would get going and the players would start joking around, it would take no five minutes to figure out the punchlines, if ever.

What were the runs themselves like? A lot of fun actually. They were not all that different from the games I've run back in Canada. This suggests that choice of words, language, etc., is not as important to a good adventure as I used to think. At the very least, choice of words is not as important in FRP as in fiction. Any story I could write in Icelandic would be a pain to read, but my players seem to have found our FRP sessions enjoyable so far.

It's heavy though, because in addition to five volumes of FRP material, I now have to carry around three dictionaries (Icel-Eng, Eng-Icel, and Icel-Icel), plus a book of grammar. Good weight training, I guess.

Though D&D does not exist up here, to the best of my knowledge, it has not been entirely unheard of. Last February in a prominent spot on the front page of the largest daily blared the headline, "Vagasamur leikur bannathur i N-Mexiko" (Suspicious game in New Mexico). The story followed about how a mysterious game "Drekar og Dyflissur" (I'll give you three guesses) had been banned by the Alamogordo school board for "teaching children demonology, magic, sorcery, murder, rape, athelism, lying, mental illness, perversion, homosexuality, prostitution, satanism, gambling and the teachings of the controversial psychologist Jung."

It's kind of humbling to realize D&D got more front page coverage in Icelandic papers than my whole country did last year.

Anyway, if anyone would like to know more about FRP in Iceland, please let me know. Some of my players have done write-ups, which I'd be happy to translate and put in A&E if there is any interest.

Three excellent comic books inspired by Norse mythology have come on the market in Iceland recently: THE BINDING OF THE WOLF, THE HAMMER'S RECOVERY, and OTHINN'S WAGER. Though I am not a comics fan and do not as a rule enjoy them, I must say that these books were a real treat. The people responsible for them have done a good job, creating three works as educational as they are entertaining.

What do I like about these books? First, the dialogue: crisp, lively and for the most part very funny. It exploits the tremendous potential for humor in the sources (such as Thrymskvitha, where the mighty Thor must go to the giants disguised as Freyja to regain his stolen hammer), yet remains remarkably true to the flavor of these myths and legends.

Second, the authors' considerable knowledge of Norse mythology. They are obviously well versed in the material they are using. This is reflected in virtually every aspect of the books: the art, the dialogue, and of course the stories themselves. Though anachronism gags would be an easy out in a work of this type, I can't say I've noticed many. The works have a slightly feminist strain in sections, but this is skillfully woven into the plot and not at all jarring.

Finally, the characterization is superb. The Aesir look, sound and think much as their Eddic counterparts do. Othinn is unforgettable as the leader of the gods--stern, commanding, yet with real limitations to his power (as comes out in Othinn's Wager). Loki is a perfect blend of malice and cunning, whose slyness is so well-suited to getting the Aesir in and out of trouble. Thor is,....Thor--loud, a bit dumb, with the greatest temper in the universe, yet the guardian of men and gods.

The authors are quite tough on Heimdall, portraying him as a complete sap. I can't say I ever thought of him that way, but given the vagueness of our sources about Heimdall, they can pretty well do what they like there. Fans of the Vanir might also take issue with Frey's depiction. Both he and Heimdall make three very funny books even funnier, though.

I found these books very entertaining and am left with great respect for their treatment of the mythology. I've seen no other popular treatment of the Norse myths that even begins to compare.

The only drawback, and it's a big one, is that these books may not be available in English. I think the originals are in Danish. I am sorely tempted to translate them, but they are worth the approximate \$5 for the art alone, I'd say. (Each is about fifty 9x12 full color pages, hardbound.) If anyone is interested, please let me know. If I could get enough people (25-30) interested to make translation economical, I would do so, provided I could get the publisher's permission (which I doubt would be a problem). For all I know, though, they may already be out in English. They certainly deserve to be.

Two movies I would recommend to FRP world-builders are "Iphigenia [at Aulis]" and "The Outlaw." The first is inspired by a Greek legend: the story of a king who is called upon to sacrifice his daughter, so his invasion fleet en route to Troy can

obtain a fair wind. It is a very moving film that creates an unforgettable atmosphere. People used to the blood-letting by the bucketfuls so characteristic of pop fantasy (and all too many FRP worlds) should see it. It depicts an intense confrontation between two radically opposed forces, and does so with virtually no physical violence whatsoever. Players who like wrestling with the power of fate shouldn't miss this movie either. They'll certainly be able to identify with the king.

More violent but no less powerful is "The Outlaw," an Icelandic movie based on The Saga of Gisli. Here too the protagonists are locked in a hopeless struggle with fate. The film is a fairly faithful rendition of one of the better short sagas. Good cinematography and the inherent power of the Icelandic landscape make it a beautiful visual experience too. The film does justice to the saga's many humorous moments as well. Authenticity is also fairly sound (my Icelandic history prof here had some gripes about the ship's cremation scene, but that's all.) An exciting movie of a very exciting saga.

One movie I don't recommend is "Return of the Jedi." If you haven't seen it yet, don't. It is a poor conclusion to the StarWars story. Unfortunately, it is difficult to point out the worst points of the film (without letting the cat out of the bag), since so many come from its hopelessly cornball ending. Like "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and many a poor FRP campaign, Return stretches one's suspension of disbelief until it snaps. Its villains become so hopelessly inept that they lose their ability to terrify or even to create tension. They become laughable. The cream of the Imperial Storm Troopers get totally schmucked by some spear-toting teddy bears. The Alliance is called upon to blow up the DeathStar (again), and Princess Leia discovers her true identity. Deus ex machinas are flown in by the shuttleload.

There were moments in the first two StarWars movies when I thought George Lucas (and his collaborators) showed glimmerings of a genuine mythic consciousness, like that people such as Werner Herzog (and Tolkien for that matter) possess in such rich abundance. That is, that they understood what it is about the true hero that has such deep and timeless appeal. For if there is one thing a hero needs to move us, to be memorable, to be...period, it is a potent and worthy adversary. A true hero does not increase in stature when his foes turn into clowns and incompetents. Quite the opposite, in fact, for it is only when the opposition is great and powerful that the hero becomes so. It does nothing for Luke and Han and Leia to show that much of what they did could just as easily have been done by some teddy-bears with pointed sticks. Return makes it clear that whatever George Lucas drew his inspiration from this time (Toy-spinoff contracts perhaps?), it certainly wasn't any kind of heroic tradition.

One RPG I have not seen mentioned in A&E up to now is ALMA MATER. AM is the first roleplaying game set in a contemporary high school, to my knowledge. As one who was involved in the playtesting at an early stage, I must say the game features a number of excellent ideas. Simulating the high school environment poses some unique challenges, but on the whole the authors have done a good job. The game's best ideas are probably of little use to campaigns set in other milieus, however, like heroic fantasy.

It is a tough game to describe, sort of an En Garde Meets Hell's Kitchen, only gorier. The level of violence (and decadence) exceeds that of any Canadian high school I've encountered, but then I've probably led a sheltered life. Character classes correspond to some classic stereotypes: Toughs, Losers, Brains, Criminals, Jocks, Cheer Leaders, and Joe Everyman (known in the game as "Averages"). Players compete for status, money, love and success (defined by one's character class to some extent). The playtesting sessions I recall were a lot of fun, though quite gory.

The game's Achilles's heel, however, is in the art department. Though mostly of reasonable quality, a few of the illus (about five, counting the cover) are--to put it bluntly--obscene. So much so that it's not far I would recommend for the under-18 crowd. The illustrations are far more explicit than the text, whose treatment of sex is actually comparable to En Garde's: i.e. nothing that should offend anyone old enough to know what sex is. The art problem is unfortunate, because--that aside--the game is a good product of high physical quality.

For those interested in more on this game, Ian R. Beste has written a detailed and fairly sympathetic review in Different Worlds 26. For those interested in getting the game, which is not available in any store, it can be ordered through the publisher, Oracle Games, PO Box 1027, Station M, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3J 2X1 for \$10.00. It is not available for sale to residents of Nova Scotia for legal reasons.

At the very end (which seems appropriate), I'd like to say a little about the SPI game RAGNAROK. Since this game came out, as we all know, SPI had had its own little Ragnarok. Thus it is up to us who outlive them to pick up the game pieces from the grass, and remember a better time.

RAGNAROK is a straightforward boardgame treatment of the last battle, when the giants storm over the rainbow bridge and pound the gods and all who support them into little charred pieces. I enjoyed it, though it does not begin to live up to the tremendous potential of its topic (which has been the way of every game produced on a Norse topic). Instead of the tremendous three-pronged attack of the myth, the giant forces approaching from east and south, all the giants enter the board on the same hex. Instead of the vast onrush that brings the rainbow bridge crashing down, Ragnarok features an optional rule that allows the giant player to reduce traffic on the bridge to a tolerable level. Giants not being stupid and most boardgamers being minimaxers, you can guess what happens. The onrush that destroys the universe is reduced to a queue for pension-cheques.

The Midgard Serpent who can belch whole thunderclouds of searing poison becomes a gartersnake whose bite might prove fatal. Even the chronology of events is reversed. One of the few things we know about the order of events at Ragnarok is that Heimdall is the last of the Aesir to die, fighting Loki. In this game, he is invariably the first, since he is not allowed to move from his fixed position on the giants' entry hex.

Despite the above limitations, I've enjoyed the game so far. Considerable tension is provided by the delayed arrival of the gods, which is determined by a die, rolled individually for each god, each turn. Occasionally a major figure like Thor is kept out of the action for a long time this way, which can cause the Aesir player to sweat broadswords. And though Ragnarok is essentially a standard army-to-army boardgame, fought on flat terrain, certain gods and giants have a special power of some type which adds spice. It seems fairly well-balanced (which is a questionable virtue in a game about Ragnarok), though the giants do have an edge. The counter mix features the big name gods and jotun, monsters like Fenrir and the Serpent, and the traditional cast of nameless thousands (berserks, einherjar and valkyries for the good guys; frost and fire giants for the bad).

If you're in the market for a rather unimaginative speculation about the nature of Ragnarok, then this game could be for you. Since SPI's demise, I am not aware of what, if any, arrangements have been made for marketing it (included as part of Ares #8). Presumably there are copies kicking around used game shops, if all else fails.

And to close, another riddle (very easy):

By light of day, this race never appears.
Men see them not then.
But at night all the time
They are light on the way.

from Peter Murray, of 168 Crofton Lane, Orpington, Kent BR6 OBW, England comes:

EXEUNT OMNES 19

- being a desperate attempt to contribute to A&E at least once in 1983. I still haven't caught up with my A&Es, and most of the comments I do have are too out of date. Look, I'll prove it -

HILDA HANNIFEN (18) Interesting writeup - but Leicht Geist is German for easy ghost; I think you mean Licht Geist (Light Ghost).

See what I mean? (Actually, it's just something which had been nagging me.)

The only games I've played recently are D&D and Illuminati - one of my regular players, and the winner of the Illuminati game, is now recovering from a road accident. You may blame a conspiracy if you wish.

My video recorder and Apple II+ have occupied most of my free time recently, so I didn't play any solo Aerheis games between the beginning of February and the end of October. This is one reason for my failure to contribute so far this year, as I didn't have any more of Feiran's Tale to present. Now I do - but first, some reviews of things I bought or saw at Games Day. (5-6 Nov.)

BATTLEMATS

Games of Berkeley (or is it Berkeley Game Company? Anyway, 2039 Shattuck Avenue, Room 206, Berkeley, Ca 94704) have been advertising these for some time now, but Games Day was the first time I'd actually seen any. Battlemats are large sheets of vinyl ($23\frac{1}{2}$ x 26") with squares, staggered squares, or hex grids overprinted on them. (Megamats are larger - 32" x 48", but apparently not available in staggered squares.) You draw the area where the characters are on the grid using markers intended for overhead projectors - I gather these are available in various colours, but I haven't got to a shop selling them yet. When you've finished with your ruined street, dungeon rooms or what-have-you, you just wipe the ink off with water (it generally takes me two goes to get it clean, and the back of the mats holds the ink and gets messed up - just don't get ink on the back).

I give these 10 out of 10 as a play aid, because they got me playing solo adventures with Feiran again. The sizes are 21mm and 25mm hexes and squares, with hexes also available in 16mm.

But suppose you don't like the flat appearance? Tough... or:

OTHERWORLD ARTIFACTS

Otherworld Artifacts (Westmount House, 49 Kingston Lane, Southwick, West Sussex BN4 4SJ, England) make small shapes out of some sort of stone powder - anyway, the idea is that you buy loads of pieces of castle walls, towers, walkways, castellations etc and build a model castle (thd one on display looked quite good). They also do dungeon corridors, doors, steps etc: although the pieces are a compromise between diorama building (they make an opening door which they point out is to scale, but too small for a figure's base to pass through) and fantasy gaming (the larger doors are out of scale, but allow figures through; steps have grooves under each riser to help hold figures' bases), and the catalogue suggests mounting pieces on felt for gaming use (3D dungeon floorplans). Their range also includes tree trunks, mushrooms (Feiran! Leave those alone!), stalactites etc. Prices range from 8p for a wall base, through 15p for a block of stone, 50p for a door, right up to £9.75 for an expansion set for castle construction. The catalogue was 65p at Games Day, but you'd probably have to add postage and packing of up to 25p to that. Oh - they're 25mm scale.

Torchlight products were also at Games Day with floors, steps etc, but OW caught my attention with their display. Prince August had a small display of cast-them-yourself Dungeon Builder components, but were mainly selling figure casting sets (and individual figures they were casting in demonstrations).

Ahh - I repeat; Dave is recovering from his accident, otherwise, I wouldn't have joked about Illuminati conspiracies. He's probably well enough to return to gaming, but is recovering a long way from Orpington.

Once upon an A&E 89/EO18, I left Feiran by the shores of Chir lake. His master, Atado, having created a living creature from the bodies of others, discovered through communication with spirits that Feiran, along with others involved in a murder, was marked for death by those that had ordered the murder. Fearing for the results of such hostile action on the results of his experiment, Atado took Feiran and the creature, Sedonero, to the ruins of the city of Tattris, built on the shore of the Lake of Chir. While Atado watches, his companions play by the lake's edge.

The homunculus was far less agile than Feiran, and after a few bruising attempts, contented himself with gazing at the satyr climbing fallen masonry and skipping through the partly-blocked streets. Superstition had long prevented people taking the stones to build with, and Atado suspected that it was not entirely unfounded. He looked over to the lake's edge, where Feiran had coaxed Sedonero into the water, and smiled at his apprentice's antics. Then he frowned. Could the water have reminded Sedonero's old brain of his earlier lives? The mage could see no other reason why the creature was wading swiftly after Feiran - unless a spirit from Old Tattris had occupied the body. Surely there remained many such spirits....

"Feiran! I think Sedonero has been possessed!" he called as Sedonero swung a clumsy fist. Feiran ducked away, and ran back to Atado, who had not moved.

"What are we going to do?"

"I know not" answered the mage. "Sedonero's spirit must be lost among the others here. Removing this spirit would kill Sedonero." He frowned again, unwilling to accept the end of all his work. Feiran looked up at him, then over at the approaching homunculus. He decided, and took a step forward.

"Can't we be friends?" he asked the creature. Sedonero stopped and grunted. Atado took up Feiran's idea.

"Are you a spirit from old Tattris?" It shook its head. Aghast, Atado asked "Are you... are you the body's original mind?" To his relief, the answer was again negative. Further questioning led to the answer that Sedonero's new mind had belonged to an apprentice mason, who sought for stones in the old city. His entire group had been possessed.

"Perhaps it is unwise to stay here, with this knowledge." frowned Atado. "We will journey around the old city - perhaps we may find a more congenial site for a camp." As they boarded the cart, he regretted the danger; he would have liked to explore the old city, but his companions were both too vulnerable, and he would prefer not to risk his ambitions.

After a short ride, they stopped by a circle of trees, near a stream. A low hillock hid the ruins of Tattris from their sight. Sedonero was still unable to talk, but Feiran wanted to know whether it would be a good idea to go back to Chyretattris now that Tattris was so dangerous.

Unfortunatley, the answer is a bit on the long side, leads to a new misunderstanding on Feiran's part. Saturday is the only practical day to post these, so I'll have to leave the three of them there.

Maybe I'll have a dot matrix printer by the next contribution.

*****The spirit of ~~XXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Holidays*****or: another bad pun*****

I'm out of room. Drot. You were lucky this time - but just wait!

GOODBYE

OTYUGH OBITUARY #2

conceived and created by the wonderfully talented, magnificently intelligent (Lee, put down your katana. Lee,...arrgh....) Vincent Foster. My address is 4010 Ashworth Ave. N., Seattle, WA 98103. Are there really cruds out there who make collect phone calls? Typed by Lee Gold (thanx, Lee)

I'm going to start this zine out (and maybe finish it with) a few (?) comments....

#96

JASON ZALK: I did not particularly like your history writeup, but there is nothing inherently wrong with it. I just don't go for that sort of thing. I enjoyed the rest of your zine, however. Keep it up.

ELLIS SIMPSON: About your remark that Traveller "is gung ho adventurer": did you know that there is a Mercenary magazine called Gung-Ho? The term goes well with Traveller, particularly Book 4 (Mercenary). By the way, "gung-ho" means (according to the magazine) "work together."

CHRIS MURRAY: I like your system on skill increments for RQ. On RQ skills, one could get away from skill areas (e.g. Knowledge) by trying something which Aftermath uses (add characteristics plus talent score in that area of expertise for a percentage). You could make up a talent system (for combat, magic, scientific, etc.). It could also determine learning rate.//I like the title of your zine. (I prefer mine, though, but I am biased.)

STEVE JONES: About the "Operation Morpheus" review: I'll give you a short one. If you like Aftermath (who doesn't?), get it! Even if you do not use the scenario itself, there are tons of rules for vehicles, new vehicles, new weapons (some of them, like the AK-47, I had already written up for my campaign; I would change the AK-47 to read Dur:3 for actual durability, i.e. using it as a hammer or club, but 4-5 for determining jams and similar problems), and a very interesting writeup on a certain "mythological" (I'm not so sure anymore) creature. (Hint, it is not a were-creature, but has long pointy teeth.) The strangest people you meet in this scenario (besides the dead ones).

I agree with your cts about EGG, even though I play D&D. (I have switched to GMing C&S.)//I liked the bit about the Runepriests of Orlanth. (I thought of something similar about six months ago.)//Your section on munchkins is funny; try using it for C&S: let the munchkin replace the Prince of Darkness as the Dark One....

JENNY HEIN: I like your filk.

WILLIAM PIXLEY: The zip gun is a very useful item to have in Aftermath.

#97

LEE GOLD: Interesting section on Chaotic Evil creatures.

ELLIS SIMPSON: To discourage players from changing weapons in RQ, you could say they have a reduced Defense value while doing so. Same with parry, et al. If they backout of combat to change weapons, have an enemy try to follow them (a good chance of this happening). Give a higher ratio of critical hits (which is reasonably realistic). Even tough characters die that way; I have seen it happen. Players could learn that changing weapons could be a fatal mistake.

TO ALL: Apparently I forgot to include the actual dimensions of the coin in my last zine (one of my main reasons for writing the article). It's 3 mm thick and 3.2 cm diameter. Big (Lee thinks too big) but easy to count.

LEE GOLD (again): I like your section on Herbalism.

STEVE GILHAM: Interesting point on magic and society. If you look at Arduin's history in AGIII, it goes back quite a way (good time spread from a literary sense; poor from a realistic sense). In the campaign I am designing (variant C&S), the timeline so far has everything quite compressed, far too much for my tastes (but it almost has an air of reality about it), so I am reworking it. An interesting problem which some may be content to leave alone. I am not, however.

An idea is to make modern technology impractical by magic (a very weak idea, I admit) or to have no central authority to encourage new scientific developments (and no wealth and funding). If there is little funding or protection, this gives scientists little time to try anything new, as they will be too busy surviving (working, fighting predators, etc.). One of the things that ended the Middle Ages was exploration (first the Crusades, later the Americas and Asia). Europe had the technology to reach America before 1066 (the Norman Invasion of England) but had little compulsion to do so until the 15th and 16th centuries. Indeed, the Romans probably could have done it, and the Vikings supposedly did (who were much more primitive than the other Europeans, but they did have a need--more land); and even the Phoenicians, Egyptians, et al. supposedly made it there. (It has been proven that a reed boat can survive the Atlantic Ocean.) So if the need is minimal, your world may be in the Dark Ages for a long time to come. (This means no gold-rich empires far to the north-south-east-west-up-down....Well, maybe down....)

JLT PATTERSON: Your system is interesting (for the Threat in the parry) but is incomplete. (So is mine, for that matter, as presented in the same A&E.) What we need (or what I need at least) is a combination of your ideas and mine for a more cohesive parry system. Lee said (in her cts to me) that in the original LoA, one's chance of parrying a weapon depending upon the skill in the weapon used--and skill in the weapon being parried. She said that it was unplayable, however.

JOHN SAPIENZA: Would "TSaR" in TsaR Wars be a pun?//I think the term you are looking for is "Taking Liberties." The alternative name for minimaxers may be "Rule-Questers" (those who search for rules or a gap in such rules they can twist to their own advantage). Note that this is not intended to offend RQers (even if "weapon cad-dies" come under the general heading).

SCOT FRITZ: The concept of Native Intelligence is interesting, but I foresee some problems. While IQ was not required in the day-to-day survival of most peasant types, it was helpful in learning how to survive (from one's family if a farmer) quickly. Predicting if a storm is coming by watching the clouds may become routine and automatic after awhile (to a degree); learning how to do this is a direct function of intelligence (and, of course, experience). Still, I like the concept, and I'm glad that someone thought of it.//Re yr cts to WOOLLEY: an issue of the Dungeoneer (later Dungeoneer's Journal, later Pegasus) dealt with that. I sorta like the idea for (n)pc's offspring, but not for them themselves.

#98

LEE GOLD: The coin weights I cited were what what were typically used by the common members of society (those would be smaller than yours), but those used by adventurers who had survived awhile. (Good armor and weapons cost LOTS in my world.) These coins would be perhaps equivalent to thrice the value of AG's Gold Sovereign (I told Loutzenhelter about double to five times the value of a GS.) I computed the size mainly to figure how big the coins in a rich treasure haul would be. Still, you have a valid point (mostly because I didn't elaborate upon my point.)

JOHN SAPIENZA: Your zine is strange, funny and informative. Keep it up.

JOHN BAMBACH: You have named all the magazines I have read. In fact, you have listed all the ones I have heard of except LORDS OF CHAOS. Unfortunately I don't know Nicolai Shapero's current address or what that zine covered.

CHRIS MURRAY: English Nannies, eh?

GEOFFREY HALSEY: Your TFT modifications make TFT more playable.

DAVID FLIN: Interesting remarks on roleplaying.

ROBERT LOUTZENHEISER: I read your shock system and really like it (as I told you in person). I'll try using it in my C&S campaign (and any other campaign I start up, if it works).//I enjoyed meeting you.

JOHN BURT: I've heard about your comic collection from Loutzenheiser.//You seem to forget that 10% of all Otyughs go berserk at some time or another, and so never become Neo-Otyugh or Beholders (too much Fly Agaric, I presume...).//Thanks for the nice comments.

MARK GALEOTTI: My sources were an old issue of OMNI (I think July, 1981) for Primal Scream (and growth increases) and DRAGON #29 ("Origins of the Norse Pantheon") which contained some supplementary material on the subject (not the basis of my whole article, however).

DAVE NALLE: Thanks for the issue of Abyss. (*I wouldn't go anywhere without the Abyssal thing.*) I plan to do a review this zine. I think I'll sub.

Now for some general comments.

RENT A DM: I think it is a bad idea. Soon after such DMs become in vogue (unlikely but possible), they would either die out (expense) or there would be no room for non-professionals and FRP might suffer.

A DEGREE IN FRP: Another bad idea, because when you have supposed experts around, people will listen to them, whether or not their ideas are any good (sort of like EGG and his fanatics but the problem would be compounded a hundredfold), while ignoring laymen whenever possible.

Well, so much for comments.

This zine supports Seattle in '86 for Origins.

Looking through the old edition of C&S awhile back, I noticed a mention of mages having to learn the "seven ancient languages, in which all magic is written." I find this in the new edition also. I could not find any mention of which languages they were supposed to be, however, so I compiled a list of probable languages (if one is running an Earth campaign, which I am not). There are, however, more than seven of them that I can think of.

SANSKRIT (-Sans. Samskṛta, lit. made together, well arranged. -sam-(together) + kṛta (made) Indo-European kwer (to make), whence Middle Irish creth (poetry). From India, still used in the Northern Buddhist Church. Regarded by some as a magical tongue.

LATIN: mentioned mainly because it was the only written language of importance for quite some time, and most people did not know it during the Middle Ages (which makes it quasi-mystical). It was used throughout Europe by the Church for quite some time.

COPTIC (-Modern Latin Copticus *Coptus, earlier Cophtus *Arabic Quft, Qift (the Copts) *Coptic Ggyptios *Greek Agyptios (Egyptian). Used through Egypt at one time (before the Muslims invaded and introduced Arabic). Now only used in the ritual of the Coptic Church (which is the native Christian Church of Egypt and Ethiopia, which is monophysitic [*i.e. maintains that Christ has one nature, partly divine and partly human.*--LG] in doctrine).

ANCIENT GREEK: most of the works at the ancient library in Alexandria were probably written in this tongue. Aristotle, Pythagoras, et al. wrote their works usually in Ancient Greek.

ASSURIAN: mentioned because it looks good.

PERSIAN: now spoken in Iran. The old Persian Empire was large at the time of the ancient Greeks until conquered by Alexander. Probably worthwhile for a Power-Word mage to learn.

ARABIC: originally spoken on the Arabian Peninsula among the Bedouins, but later throughout the north and west of Africa (and places like Iraq, Lebanon and Israel) for a long time. Has practical application too, if one is a traveller (or a Crusader).

TIBETAN: supposedly a very magical country, where the High Lama resides and the portal to Aghartha is, according to some. A good candidate for the "top seven."

CHINESE: the language(s) of a very old country and culture. Useful for merchants also (particularly if in later times or if you live near eastern Europe).

OLD CHURCH SLAVONIC: also called Old Bulgarian. This is the south Slavic tongue used in the ninth century translation of the Bible by Cyril and Methodius. Still used as a liturgical tongue by Orthodox Slavs.

I also have thought of some languages which would be impossible for Europeans to learn during the Middle Ages, but might be possible if one had other than conventional methods at one's disposal.

POLYNESIAN: any of the Polynesian languages might be useful. (I do not know if they have an indigenous written language.)

LANGUAGES OF CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA: Olmec, Toltec, Aztec, Mayan, Incan, etc. Incan did not (to my knowledge) have a written language, so each mage may have his own transliteration system. (Note: transliteration systems vary only in terms of repulsiveness in all practicality.)

Well, there it is. Any additions, clarifications or comments are welcome. (Those that are insulting will still be welcome, but ignored.)

REVIEW: ABYSS MAGAZINE #26

Abyss is published by Dave Nalle (the editor); a six issue sub costs \$7. You get a small magazine, about 5.5"x8.8", with 26 pages (30 if you include front and back covers) of articles on RPGs, book reviews, fiction and (in #26 at least) a scenario (the Obsidian Wombat), which appears to be written up for Ysgarth. There is also some artwork: some good, some bad, some okay.

The magazine also has some humor. ("You Asked for It" by Mort Munchkin kept me laughing for quite awhile.) Its artwork is from contributors (mostly not too great or noteworthy, but some is quite good) plus out-of-copyright art from the 19th century (which tends to be very good); this was used on #26 for the cover.

All in all, I like the magazine. If you want to sub, you can send to Ragnarok Enterprises, 1402 21st St. NW, Washington, DC 20036; \$7/6 issues (one year; it's published bimonthly). I don't know how much a single issue would cost.

OFFBEAT WEAPONS

No, this is not going to be a stream of weapon stats and rules, but just a listing of a few unusual (?) weapons.

TABLE: a must for those frequenting bars. If playing D&D or old C&S, proficiency is gained after two uses. For RQ or such, 25% proficiency base, increasing to 50% after one use and 75% after two (thereafter normal progression). Used primarily to put someone on the floor and keep him there, but may also be used to pin someone to a wall or as a shield. (Table-rush is permitted.) Few courses exist in this art but it is easy enough to learn on one's own.

ROLLED UP MAGAZINE: can be a lethal weapon. Roll magazine up and hit enemy in the face with the end of the magazine. (I'm afraid A&Es would not hold up too long for this use, so find something like SOF or Eagle.) Go for the mouth or nose (or upper lip and nose).

SPRAY CAN: an old favorite. Hair spray works fine (go for the eyes). If they wear contact lenses, particularly hard lenses, consider the enemy as good as dead if you have a follow up. Also useful as a bomb.

SHARPENED EDGE OF A CREDIT CARD: can be an American Express Card (don't leave home without it)! Can also be used to open certain locks.

TV REMOTE CHANNEL CHANGER: I know I'm going to be laughed at for this one. Useful against people with infravision (shine directly in eyes) like elves.

So much for obscure weapons. (Any rumors that I am a violent person are only partly substantiated.)

While at Dragonflight (no, not Dragonmeet, but Dragonflight), I found an Intro to a game called "Tree-of-Life-Worlds" (TOLW), followed by a short demo game. (The Intro lasted about four hours, while the demo game ran about 45 minutes.)

The first part (maybe an hour) of the Intro was a discussion of the different game systems out (from DD&D to Top Secret and EPT). No, Dave, Ysgarth wasn't mentioned, but a lot of good games weren't (like Aftermath, my all time favorite). It then got into the world situation and mechanics (simple but very well explained), and then character generation (which reminds me a little of Rolemaster, a little of Ysgarth, and a little of the New C&S, but definitely not a copy of anything).

The World(s) of TOLW seem to be a conglomeration of modern Earth, JRRT, and the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (with other goodies thrown in), all in one campaign. I don't know how, but it seems to work, and the Intro was a good game to boot (a bar room situation, ladies night, with the only weapons allowed being "eating daggers"--this was a modern bar!). I, being the law-abiding soul I am, took my shotgun and broken bottle (both hidden under my overcoat) and put the overcoat in a weapon locker in the foyer.

Copies of the rules are \$25 (whew) for a booklet about the size and dimensions of "The Realm of Yolmi" rules (thick). There were only 125-150 copies printed up, so I do not know if it is still available. Apparently it is being considered for publication by Chaosium. (Can any of you help confirm this?)

There is one problem. The game designer (also the one who ran the Intro and demo) goes by the pseudonym "Shadowhawk." (None of us asked her real name, especially after she told us she is a Black Belt.) She is a member of the Brass Dragon Society (a gaming group, very large and cloistered--usually) and writes (or at least used to) fiction for their newsletter (under "Shadowhawk"). It isn't really a problem, though, just unusual. The game looks interesting anyway (but I am too busy to get a copy). If you want the address and more information, write me and I'll dig it up.

Has anyone out there done anything with the Infinity System (by Infinity Games)? I bought it in early 1980, and it looks interesting (except for the skill and magic system). But there is something that looks unusual (figuratively, not literally) on the back cover. There are some plugs there for some upcoming products (1979), among others, a plug for Aftermath.

When I first read it, I thought nothing of it, for I had not even heard of Aftermath then. (I don't think it had been released yet.) I figured it might be something to watch for. (Anything has gotta be better than Gamma World, Metamorphosis Alpha, and the Realm of Yolmi.) About 18 months later, however, I heard FGU had bought the rights to Aftermath by Phoenix Games (the decals with the FGU logo cover the Phoenix logo on the old edition). At Dragonflight I, when I first saw Aftermath,

I bought it and looked through it. Sure enough, it was almost certainly designed by Phoenix Games. (It has almost identical mechanics to the old edition of Bushido, then by Phoenix Games.)

Oh well, I figured that Phoenix had gotten the rights to it somehow and later sold out. I let it drop at that. But then when I was looking at the new edition of Bushido (by FGU), the box cover said that the old edition of Bushido by Tyr or Phoenix was only part of the world of Bushido. Wait a minute. Where did Tyr come into the picture. I am quite confused. Does anyone know what is going on?

PETER DA SILVA (PBZ move): After the explanation from Suenteus Po, I yell (near the top of my voice, i.e. very loud): "Hey, you, Turner, shaddup."

I then say (to Suenteus Po), "I would like a new body if that is all right with you. I'd like something along the order of big and smart and reptilian (like a black dragon!), but able to keep most of my abilities (mostly speech and linguistics). If that is not possible, I'll take something where my abilities and thought processes remain relatively intact, but I would rather mind being a hobbit, aardvark, or an elf. (Yes, Naile, I am also a confirmed elf-hater....) If nothing else is available, I'll take an armadillo body."

After that, I start singing "Armadillo by morning...." (imaginary filk version of "Amarillo by morning...."). After I scare everyone with that, I yell, "Would anyone be interested in a mutual defense pact with me? I don't know what I am anymore or where I'm going, but is anyone interested?" I repeat this twice.

Exactly what do I see, feel, hear, do, etc?

On a final note: are any of you going to Norwescon this March (probably the final weekend)? I would like to meet all of you. Although Norwescon is primarily a science fiction con, not a gaming con, there is quite a bit of gaming (all types, from RPGs to Monopoly, including Risk). It is held at the Henry M. Jackson Airport (it was Seatac until a few months ago when Senator Jackson died) Hyatt House. Perhaps we can have an APA party (I mean, for the con which has everything....).

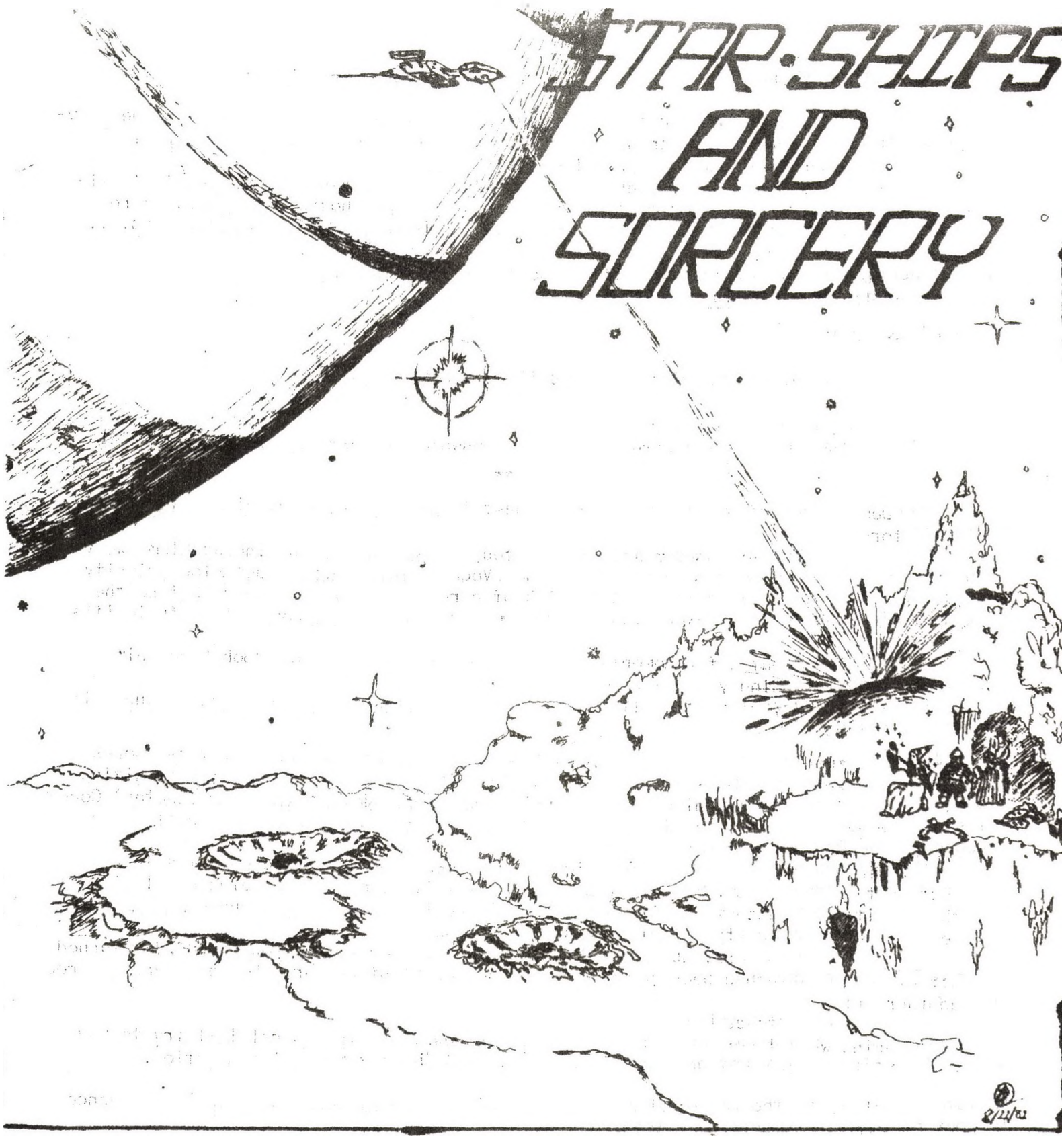
Looking over last year's con booklet (Norwescon VI), they have a masquerade (very popular), SCA exhibitions, an Autograph Session, and all sorts of seminars (from mythology, past and present through military uses for the moon to future insults). All in all, it's a good con. Hope to see you there. (Write if you want more information.)

Well, until next time, keep your American Express Card sharp!

+++++
CHILD & UBERMANN, who are currently vacationing in Ft. Lauderdale, want to thank everyone for their comments and to answer a few questions:

JENNY HEIN: M. T. stands for Multi-Talented.

BROOKS: re Combined Activities: Roll a D20 and divide by the modifier for each skill. If both numbers are odd, then Add. If both numbers are even, then multiply. Otherwise, consult your pineal gland.



STAR-SHIPS AND SORCERY

STARSHIPS AND SORCERY is about just that (with a little leeway). It is the first publication of PANDEMONIUM CORPORATION, an active and growing company sponsored by both the national Dark Elf Society and the various local Friends of the Dark Elves clubs. For a catalogue of all our fine products, or the name of the FDE club nearest you, send a stamped, self addressed envelope to:

Pandemonium Corporation
666 Abyssal Road
New York, New York

10019

I have been regularly reading A&E for about a year now. An attempt to get several members of our playing group to regularly write creative material did not go far, so I thought that I would practice on you people.

I am David Union, a 21-year-old Physics major at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. I have and have tried most of the game systems on the market and have more hobbies than are worth listing. (End abbreviated introduction). So here goes....

"If the one is, the one is not; and if the one is not, nothing is."

--Plato: Parmenides

"THE WHY OF IT"--Part I

"Jimmy," called his mother, "It's time to come in now."

"Mother."

"Jimmy," his mother queried.

"Be right there, ma," James Alexander answered and went in for dinner.

"Dammit, I worked hard to get that past the committee and trained two blasted years for--"

"Now, Jim--" Robert Sampson interrupted, "you know the funding problems we've been having ever since that flap about the Vega. This thing is just a low priority job--so why don't you calm down and think of a reason why it should go before the mining station and the power plant, and come back when you have. I'm afraid it's out of my hands."

Jim was silent a few moments as he let his anger subside. "Bob," he said, "Isn't there anything you can do?"

"I'll tell you what. Call me back here at the office in four hours, and I'll see what I can get."

Jim immediately went out to Mick's Bar and had some of the most tense hours of waiting he was ever to experience.. But the time did pass, albeit with agonizing slowness. Three and a half hours after leaving the office of the Interplanetary Council's project director, he could not wait any longer. He took out his wallet and punched up the Project Center's code.

"Jim, you're early," Bob's voice said as his image appeared on Jim's TYT. "But that I was expecting. Now I couldn't get quite the original plan, but I did get the committee to accept it with one minor alteration: you don't launch until next year. A one year postponement--you still with us?"

"Yeah, don't worry about me, I'm in. Thanks, Bob; I owe you one." Jim turned off his TYT and turned back to the bar. "Another blasted year," he said, and ordered another drink.

...to be continued....

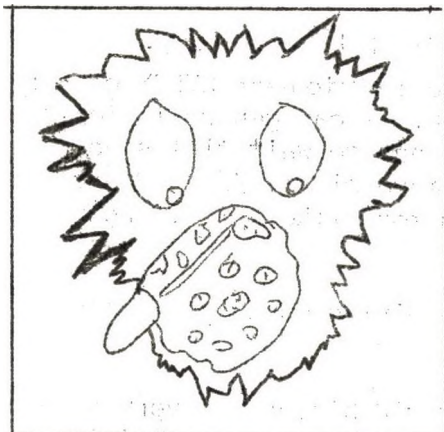
Considering what I have so far, this will take awhile. In general I'll try to have at least 1.5 pages from now on per segment. This is sort of the introduction.

"Aristotle calls man the rational animal. All my life I have been seeking evidence to confirm this." --Bertrand Russell

Views: Like many people, I began my RPG experience with AD&D. We began with a simplified version. Since then many mechanics changes have come and gone. The BEST combat system for a FRPG I have found is that in MILANDA. It diverges from the basic ideas of increased damage points or armor absorption, instead using armor penetration. But the critical table and weapons class tables need expansion, especially to account for non-edged weapons. That rewritten table will appear when I have tested it more.

I do not like Runequest, although I don't mind some of the Runequest-based systems. C&S combat takes a bit too long for my taste. It turns out that after complaining about it for two years, rewriting the whole thing and then looking for a replacement, that AD&D (without the munchkinism of the last couple of year's "official" changes) is actually one of the systems I enjoy most. I think the key is to use enough of it (like speed factors and WD mods). Of course, in any case the GM will make or break the game. If he has to refer to charts to run combat, it will be too slow. And the campaign I've been in recently that I most enjoy of FRPGs has had almost no fighting,...more roleplaying.

Overall, the game I most enjoy is Champions. I am both playing in a campaign and running one. Both have been going on for a bit over a year on an irregular basis. We started with the old rules, guessing most of the changes that came out with the new rules. Of all the other SHRPGs, the only other one I have seen of comparable design quality is Superworld. I liked it when it came out in the WoW set, and even more when it was revised and expanded.



"Our sensors have gone over this asteroid with a fine-toothed comb, and I assure you, commander, there is nothing unusual out here."

A major dichotomy exists in most RPGs. While the games are supposed to be ROLE PLAYING, most resolve combat in a fashion more akin to a board-game. What I like in Champions is that instead of a combat being a point at which roleplaying is suspended, it is a point at which it is accentuated. And since I treat these games as escapism, doing things as a character that I could never do in the real world, I also enjoy the fact that it is a less bloodthirsty game. I far relate more easily to a hero who solves the mystery or captures the villain than to one who goes around beheading anyone that stands in his/her way.

"When I was a boy, I was told that anybody could become president. Now I'm beginning to believe it." --Clarence Darrow

Modifications: we have made several modifications to Champions. The first is to put a limit of 160 pts for disadvantages. Another is to

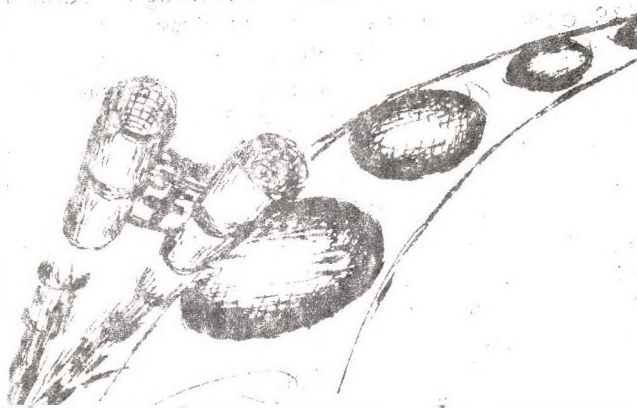
convert the points saved by having "powers in hero form only" to straight disadvantage points, rather than being a cost reduction. I found that this better balanced incoming characters. Using fractional experience points made assigning them much easier. Since darkness affects the user as well as those surrounding, I have kept the cost as per the original rules. Lastly, the system lacked a way to deal with pets or familiars. I am currently trying 5 pts for base scores of 5 and 50 pts, or 20 pts for base scores of 10 and 50 pts. Most anything else can be dealt with in the system. "Splitting" into multiple people/personas is not handleable for a cost that represents its worth,...but using the pet rule for this power makes it fairly straightforward. (In this respect Superworld has better coverage.)

Finally I have a question for the general readership: is forensics worth keeping? If so, then doesn't detective work either become insignificant or a role-playing deterrent?

"The most dangerous foe to truth and freedom in our midst is the solid majority." --Ibsen

COMMENTS: First I would like to say that all of you have provided me with much thought-provoking and entertaining reading. There were many times I felt motivated to comment on particular things but not enough to attempt a contribution. The current issue I have as I type this is 97. I will base all comments on that.

LEE GOLD: I too dislike the predominance of the necessity for military training in SFRPGs. But it can be easily worked around in most of them. Articles like "The College Option" even allow for it in (arrgh) Traveller. And in the Star Trek RPG, there is a merchant PC setup--and more skills actually open to the non-military types (or so I am told by some of the players from the local group that plays it). I am waiting for a restock on OTHER SUNS which just came out. It doesn't look too bad, but I will hold comments until I get a copy.



BRUCE DANNER: I do not find it either necessary or convenient to hear EVERY conversation, especially when running a large VD&D player group. I can generally follow several conversations at once, but if each of 8+ players has to wait till s/he's sure I can hear before saying anything, things begin to move slowly. The Boardgame writeup was very good. It makes the boardgame seem more like a RPG. What is the average playing time for a game session of it?

"I know mankind too well to think they are capable of receiving much, much less applauding it." --Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

STEVE GILHAM: I have found that having a well charted world history is very useful. When I began running my VD&D several years ago, I charted out the world's history and geography. Detailed character histories also help a lot. But as far as plotting for the future, I find that a campaign outline is a great timesaver. Forming the outline of one-sentence descriptions of something going on allows me to nest many sub-plots within whatever Machiavellian plots I design, while keeping things flexible and cutting down on the paperwork. I can then write whatever specific adventures within the context of this outline.

JOHN SAPIENZA: Bravo on your piece on Confrontational Gaming. Fortunately the players in our group are all more into cooperative gaming! And I can well relate to badly balanced setups. For instance, we once had to battle the familiar of a black magic type in a beginning Dragonquest campaign (a player). But such things are generally handled and balanced by a good ref.

JOSEPH DIEN: The system looks fairly good. Have you looked carefully into Arduin? Without the silly monsters, spells and treasure, the mechanics are pretty good. Of course, they did fail to clearly illustrate the spell point system, but one can figure it out from what they say of it. The two neatest (figurative) combat systems I've seen for basic hit determination are these:

1. One table crosses a given weapon vs a given armor. One then adds score-related mods (offensive bonus, defensive bonus) and one's Fighter-level. Then use D&D damages with Dragonquest armor absorption.
 2. Instead of dice, use playing cards. One selects three cards from a shuffled deck. These are checked on a player-accessible chart (easy to memorize). They are the valid combat options. Each combatant picks one of his three, and then the two cards are compared with level/score mods for the result.
- You may notice that #1 looks a lot like your system. The main difference is that by using the base numbers, one can have heavy armor make one slower-moving

and hence easier to hit. Note one could easily just use Milanda's Defensive mods and use its armor values as the number of points absorbed (and of course the armor-related def mods).

VINCENT FOSTER: ...hmm,...food for thought....Unfortunately I think that in several D&D-based systems, the STR bonuses only affect the extremes--or at least mostly so. So half the STR bonus does not seem to take into account the fact that STR will be the major factor in determining how much a weapon's weight affects someone's ability to use it....Will think more on this table.

"He who must be creator in good and evil--verily, he must first be a destroyer and break values into pieces." --Friedrich Nietzsche

BECKETT ROSSET: Sorry to hear about the poor condition of the comic stores there! We have two specialty (comic/sf/rpgs) stores that stock or order everything....Groo the Wanderer, though, is only a loss if you enjoy Sergio's stuff. If you like his stuff, you will enjoy it greatly. On the other hand,...though I subscribe to most of the comics on the market, I do pass on that.

"Despite all the complaints about the high cost of living, most people still think it's worth it." --Anon

DAVID WEBB:
My main objection to RQ was that a PC with a high POW was at a great advantage compared to others. This is apparently a result of the world the game is set up on. Can one write POW out of the game, either entirely or for use only in dealing with spells or as a "The Force" (Star Wars-ish) type recognition (as per your not on 18+ POW)?



DEANNA SUE RAY: I enjoyed story. More to come?

DAVID NALLE: The idea of using lots of time to let the players have a part in the history seems a great idea for FRPGs, but I'm not sure how well it would work with something more contemporary. For instance, there are so many things happening in a Champions campaign I am in that my character (Seeker) uses up just about all available time. We originally started trying to cover the seven intervening days at the once a week sessions, but have fallen behind even that. The other players have equally busy characters. Considering how characters age in the comics, I think that in a comic simulation it is probably unavoidable.

VINCE BURCHETT: I long ago ceased to wonder why something by TSR was screwed up. But recently an article was published in Dragon (magazine) with DDG corrections on the Celtic mythos. Have you thought of submitting?

MIKE DAWSON: I think a capable game ref must be able to keep the game interesting to all involved, no matter what the characters decide. One should not need to step outside the role in the roleplaying game to make a decision. It is up to the GM to make things run smoothly, not the players.

On the other hand, to be nice to the GM, it is nice to set up the PC's personality and history so it won't be impossible for the ref. For example, in our CHAMPIONS campaign, we had a PC with "easily provoked" as a psych. This caused some trouble until the player began reducing this.

On the third hand, this assumes all the players get along and have similar goals. I believe the object of being the referee is to provide for the players' enjoyment (perhaps the reason I prefer to play over run). If half the group is into serious roleplaying and the other half into munchkinism, then either the group should be reorganized or the DM (used interchangeably with GM, Ref) must be somehow ready to deal with it. As mentioned in Sapienza's contribution, there are various styles of play. But no one actually plays one exclusively--or at least few do. There is a story going on in any game; and if it is being run well, the players want to find out what happens next. So even though my main interest is role-playing, I do indeed find it occasionally necessary to stretch a character portrayal to assist in moving the plot; and I suspect that others out there do also.

INTERLUDE....THE STAR CONQUERORS....



"Perhaps, as has often been said, the trouble with people is not so much with their ignorance as it is with their knowing so many things that are not so." --W. A. W.

"Not only doth he lie, who speaketh contrary to his knowledge, but more so, he who speaketh contrary to his ignorance." --Nietzsche

"The universe never did make sense; I suspect it was built on government contract."

—Anon

Now to open an interesting can of worms....

"The practice of burying the dead, undertaken for sanitary reasons, led to the belief in the immortality of the soul." --Giovanni Vico

In many FRPGs, Elves are portrayed as having no souls. If this is true, then what effect should it have on their personality, their use of magic, the strength of their gods, the applicability of Elven Clerics, etc.? If one can be a complete person without a soul (by the way, I am an atheist), then what difference does HAVING a soul make?

Before I forget, the name of this zine was unknowingly donated by Ian Ralph in context of a campaign design. He is aware I have used it, since he didn't....

I always pictured Gnomes as 18" tall humanoid ~~with~~ either minor magics or major trickeries. D&D portrays them as Dwarflike. Any idea where this came from?

I am interested in acquiring two things. First a copy of THE SPAWN OF FASHION (game) and second a subscription to Whispers. Anyone know where?

Disclaimer: I tend to comment more on things that I disagree with, which I hope doesn't concern TOO many people.

General Note: Did not see you lastish, but, GEORGE PHILLIES, I greatly enjoy all your fiction and hope you write lots more.

BACK TO COMMENTS

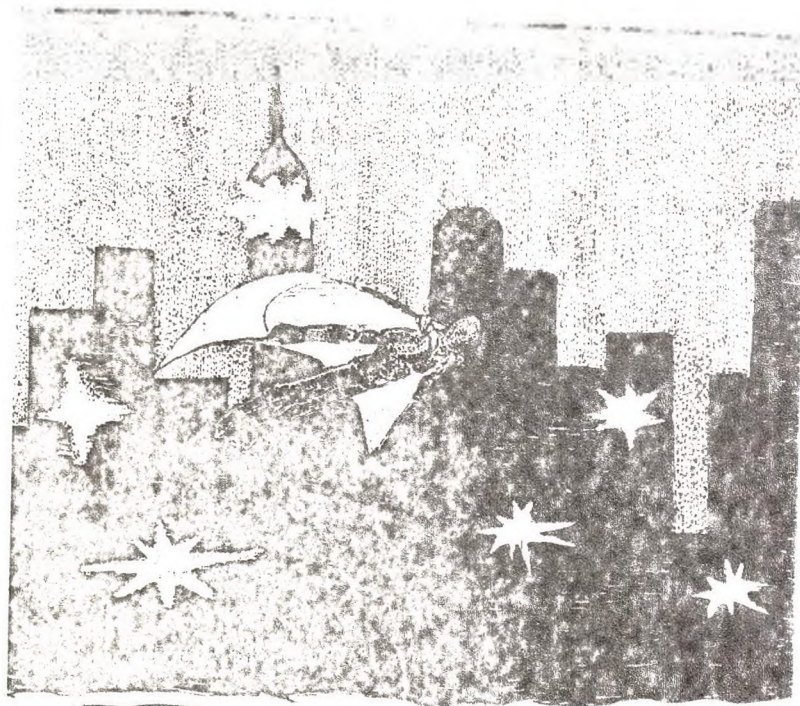
JOHN SAPIENZA: the best roleplayer in our group (alternate Champions GM, C. Staples) is also the best minimaxer I know. I am not real heavy into minmaxing, but I know it does not exclude roleplaying. Some people enjoy playing a PC who is as effective as s/he can be, given the current mechanics. More power decreases survival worry and hence can in SOME cases lead to more time to roleplay and more attention to it. I have always considered minimaxing to refer to USING the rules to get as powerful a character as possible, sometimes even finding the loopholes in rationality or specifics in the rules that go against the basic ideas behind them.

SCOT FRITZ: re PBZ: I doubt I'd go through such a portal. On the other hand, I could write along with a "what if" I went through. The most I could grab would be a pack with sleeping bag, tent, chess set, flashlight, and a few other weird things I keep in it; some clothes; a few books, some dice, pencils, paper; and my guitar case. Would probably grab my camera case, because of the weird things I keep in it. If time permits, I would bring my walkie-talkies (nothing special, and maybe the batteries inside are good). Closest thing to a weapon would be a camping knife with whetstone and compass (on sheath; not too useful as the knife is magnetized).

When through, having been lucky with dice, I will try to test for weird abilities. Then, if finding little, would scout the area from cover. : : !!

I will hold off on scores until I confuse you people with my VD&D. As far as who rolls what (in my opinion), the ref rolls for NPCs unless player is unoccupied due to situation or for skill rolls WHEN IT HELPS SPEED THINGS UP. Otherwise the occasional rolls, etc. are handled by the players. Only when the player is not supposed to know of success (and I do mean PLAYER, not PC) is it NECESSARY for the ref to roll.

DAVID DUNHAM: Judaeo-Christian religions specifically involve submission to the will of God. But few (comparative) people follow these religions in the fashion of the ancient ardents. (Read Kierkegaard if you care....) Therefore, those who do not follow the faith in this fashion will not have this submissive aspect.



Name: Nightwing

str 23	Powers
dex 26	Martial Arts
con 23	Acrobatics 14-
bod 12	Disguise 13-
int 18	Sec. Systems 13-
ego 14	Stealth 17-
pre 18	Ego Def -9
com 20	1d6 Luck
pd 15	3lvls Enh, Hear
ed 15	1lvl Enh. See
spd 7	+5" Running
rec 10	Climbing
end 46	Gliding OAF Cape 15"
stn 36	

Total Cha Cost: 174

Total Pow Cost: 100

Pts Disadvantages

15	Code V.S. Killing
	Robs from the Rich
20	Hunted--(hero) Acrobat
20	Hunted--(hero) Tessla
10	Always leaves clues
	Avoids fighting
15	Secret I.D.
7	Hunted--police (x $\frac{1}{2}$)
10	2x stun V.S. sonics

Total Disadvantages: 97

Villian Bonus: 77 (exp. pts)

Glen Foster, bored playboy, was looking for something to do. Listening to his many wealthy compatriots of the international Jet-Set brag about their security, he thought it would be fun to test it. Using his wealth to gain the needed skills, he set out to baffle the detectives of the world, emeshing each series of robberies into its own clue-ridden puzzle. Now the excitement of crime is the only game the former spoiled-sportsman truly enjoys.

"The practice of burying the dead, undertaken for sanitary reasons, led to the belief in the immortality of the soul." Giovanni Vico

"Thus that which is the most awful of evils, death, is nothing to us, since when we exist there is not death, and when there is death we do not exist." Epicurus

RE-TURNING UNDEAD...

to a more standard portrayal. Many a monster movie went by wherein the heroes and heroins of the film came into extended physical contact with vampires without dying or suffering greatly. And did you ever wonder how one could loose "experience" by being touched (hit) by an undead creature and yet still have all one's memories intact? An interesting Judges Guild article suggested replacing this loss with temporary strength and/or constitution losses. I'd like to go a bit further.

Vampires: The things that make most vampires so fearsome are their hypnotism, strength, cunning, their intelligence and their many centuries of experience, and occasionally their resources. Their strength is greater than that of two men, so in AD&D terms over 20. Those that use their hands should be proficient with them, and get some sort of monkish H-t-H combat skills. Whatever PC available skills are similiarly available to them, as an individual. And damage from weapons that do not cut should be severely

reduced. Their hypnotism is powerful enough to make a victim come to be bitten, but this takes time and concentration.

Finally, a hypnotized or helpless victim can be bitten. By choice, this can:

1. Kill victim (no blood left, so Raise Dead can't work; this also leaves a currently stronger vampire).
2. Kill victim s.t. three days after burial he will rise as a vampire, unless the body is treated to prevent this.
3. Bite victim, leaving him alive and well,...but three such bites make him a vampire under control of the original. Note that each bite makes the person a bit more of a vampire ("the light seems to bother you a bit..."). The victim is not aware of the process (but could guess) or of the biting events. There is some control, even after the first bite.

Maybe I'll try ghosts nextish....

"You're thinking now, and that makes you forget to talk."

--from Alice in Wonderland, by L. Carroll

"A small revenge is humaner than no revenge at all." --Nietzsche

General note for you people who have been trying:

Milanda as is can be run as an EP-less, class-less system without the character uniformity of RQ. A PC's history (from childhood) is chosen, generating its abilities and "scores." Now, anyone know how to get hold of Milanda access? They don't seem to have a distributor.

"The source of ultimate failure is easily seen in an algebraic dilemma. Since direct and indirect use of energy account for about 10% of consumption, a 100% price in the price of energy--the current rate of increase--will cause a 10% rate of inflation all by itself. With energy going up at this pace, price stability can only be achieved if the price of the remaining 90% of consumption falls by an average of 11%. But this means that the incomes of those who provide these goods and services must also fall by 11%.

"Mathematically, a promise to stop inflation is a promise to cut substantially the money incomes of most Americans. Economic policies can only stop inflation if they can force enough Americans to suffer the necessary reduction in their incomes."

--D. Thurow (12/79)



Farewell, bold adventurers....We will meet again.

--David M. Union

Inspirations, AAE 99

Well, there went one of my bright ideas - I've not counted pages, but I didn't see a UK dominance. Oh well, so it goes. Partly my fault - not enough people within easy reach to coerce to the typer.

LET, re Heydt - The US is larger than the EEC - no wonder it is able to support a great cultural diversity, despite being notionally a single country. The US was also a frontier society within living memory (just), and is still adjusting to the fact it isn't any longer. I feel that this is at the root of the US gun problem.

Mark Goldberg: I see that this is still the TFT conversation...I'd not class spears as polearms myself, and coming through D&D rather than RQI, I tended to have a bias to swords for handweapons.

Mike Lewis: The WD letters page is in fact very much like the letters page in other UK hobby prozines e.g. Military Modelling. There is just something very British about being stiff and formal, and as far as the Fiend Factory goes, it is unfortunately what sells the zine to a horrifyingly high proportion of its readership. If it were dropped, I think WD might suffer problems, rather than being able to shake off its restraints.

Bill Keyes: What you'd find out from the funnel experiment is how asymmetric your pouring was; on the scale of a few cm coriolis forces are just too weak to show (try it some time).

Peter daSilva: While the modus operandi of the Hackers may differ from the typical Stasis limitation, that is what, when all is said and done, they act like. Stability of culture is imposed, rather than acting naturally.//I liked the VIPT stats system. It gets filed away in the little black book.

Daniel James: Re nasty equation 3 - instead of the T^2/r_s one may use stellar luminosity (in units of solar luminosity) given by

$$L = M^4 \quad M = \text{mass in solar units, for } M \text{ above } 0.4 \\ = 0.23 M^{2.3} \quad \text{for smaller masses}$$

The note about using absolute temperatures (either Kelvin or Rankine) is important. For the Earth, assuming thermodynamic equilibrium we have a mean temperature of just shy of 300K, so

$$T_{\text{planet}} = 300 L_s^{1/4} r_p^{-1/2} \text{ K} \quad (\text{OK} = -273 \text{ C})$$

where L_s is the stellar luminosity, and r_p is your r_{orbit} in AU (radius of Earth's orbit).

Note that in equilibrium the temperature of Arlen Walker's world Pandora, at 0.93 of Earth's temperature, would have a mean temperature of some 21 K below the Earth's, more than enough for his ice-bridge.

Simulations by Dole of planetary growth showed that once H, He could be accumulated from the protoplanetary disk, mass grew rapidly, although, coupled with the finite mass supply, there tends to be an exponential decay of numbers with mass. For Earth-like temperatures, the magic mass of H, He capture is about 3 Earthmass. The lower edge is much less well defined, but is probably about 0.5 earth mass.

The ideal situation would be to write a program that decided the stellar mass, grew a planetary system by a variant on Dole's simulation (one that took a reasonable time on a home micro) and then interpreted the results. If I ever get off my backside I might get in touch and outline such a system for hacking - or write me and coerce details ...

Of course, done properly, such a system would be marketable

Quentin Long: The rule to prevent e.g. Lemuel decapitating a giant with his sonic screwdriver can be replaced by any GM who feels competent to run free-form by the simple exclamation "Don't be silly!" Quite simply, it requires the players not to be rule abusers - anyone who'd do such stupid things wouldn't be stopped merely by the existence of a rule to the contrary, someone with common sense doesn't need the rule.

The true purpose of the rules is to give an idea in advance of the mean results of any action/skill/spell/whatever, which the players and GM expect. The game can then be ad-libbed without harm.

Paul B Mason: I guess that being myself neither part of the small-h hobby or the large-H inner circle, it's not surprising that I've not been so impressed by I'M A GENItm as some people.//The right-wing bias in the US is not surprising, given that the country as a whole is far to the right of us. Even Thatcher's henchmen are 'nt as far to the right as the Republican party, and the Democratic party are to the right of the UK centre parties.

Dave Nalle: Most of your replies to comments from A&E 95 seem to have been explanations that you didn't mean that TTT was impossible to role-play, but that the published scenarios didn't encourage it. Much confusion would have been spared if you'd said what you meant in the first place.//It may just be cynicism, but I would not be surprised to find a similar shifting of ground when the replies to your RQ piece receive comment.

Given the disagreement (e.g. Dawson & Sapienza) about what actually makes up roleplaying, I feel that too much of your dislike for other games systems would be more properly be represented as dislike of their players' styles, which is not surprising, for the reasons I gave in A&E 99.

Re the Thieves' Guild - I'm not sure how you'd explain the survival of organized crime in this world if everything was so squeaky clean as you seem to make out.//However, I cannot agree too strongly about the stranglehold Lankmar, via D&D, has had on modern fantasy traditions.

Here I stick my neck out and claim that only the hoards of imitators save the Lankmar stories from being bottom equal in my list of modern fantasy. I really cannot believe that the same man wrote 'Spacetime for Springers' and 'The Big Time'. Too many of the standard D&D cliches stem from these books, and even had I liked them before I encountered D&D I'd find it impossible to do so now.//I suppose it is a matter of perspective whether one considers the 'Mob' to be equivalent to a 'Thieve's Guild' or not. Certainly organized crime as portrayed in fiction comes extremely close to the Guild you ridicule, meeting the criteria of dominating the crime of an area and clamping down on outsiders, open, shady but legit dealings by upper echelons, publicly known about. If such an organization acquired the name of 'the Thieves' Guild' it wouldn't need to be even slightly legit as a Guild (if anyone quibbled, Louie and the boys would pay them a visit).

Re OD&D where O is any letter you choose - I agree, I can hardly tell the difference - there's less between B/L/D&D, OD&D and AD&D than between OD&D and the variants I've called 'D&D'. As usual, it's TSR trying to get as much money for least effort.

David Webb: See the comment I misdirected to Daniel last ish(96)//I'd also add Techniques of High Magic - a manual of self-initiation by Francis King and Stephen Skinner (pub Sphere) £1.50 and 'Charms, Talismans and Amulets' by Leo Vinci (for which I have no details) as interesting sources.

Robert Saunders: Spin (angular momentum) is a conserved quantity, like mass-energy. The original gascloud from which the sun and planets coalesced had some slight spin. Centrifugal force made infall towards the axis more difficult than infall parallel to it, so the system became disk-shaped. In this denser configuration viscosity due to turbulence or magnetic fields was more effective, and particles could interact. The stable equilibrium of such a viscous disk is reached when all the mass has accreted to the centre, and an infinitesimal mass at large distance

containing all the angular momentum and none of the energy. However, as the system becomes very sparse before this occurs, viscosity becomes ineffective. We call the central mass, with some angular momentum, the Sun.

Within the disk, some lumps will occur, these will form the planets, and repeat the process on a smaller scale. As the inner regions of the disk have less angular momentum per unit mass than the outer, we expect that moving material from a wide band into a narrow one (the volume swept by a planet into the planet itself, the former being governed by its gravitational pull, not its area for running into things) to leave it with a slight excess of angular momentum over that required for its orbit, so it will spin around its axis too, in the same direction as it makes its orbit.

Tides do tend to transfer spin between bodies, and from rotational angular momentum to orbital. Hence Mercury has been slowed, and Venus even reversed in direction by such interaction. The Moon has been slowed until its day equals the period of its orbit around the Earth, and the Earth's days has slowed, as spin has been transferred into orbital motion. So some planets in the Solar system do rotate in other directions (Uranus rotates about an axis inclined 90° to North). The possibility exists for a planet to be at rest compared with the fixed stars if the correct tides act upon it, and in fact it is not that unlikely feeling.

Arden Walker: See above et to Danizel James re Pandora.//re me - but that's exactly how dictionaries do work. Also, since I'm not Illuminated myself, trying to explain it would be like a blind man trying to explain the subjective experience of the colour red. See later et to Steve Jones.

Steve Jones: 'Big Rubble' contains riddles and answers for 'Pick Pockets, Swimming and climbing. I've made up one, myself, for the Dog Training skill. The riddle is "Does a dog have Buddha nature." Not being Illuminated, I don't know the answer, but one of the PCs in my current campaign does - he, however, is not available for comment, and the player knows about as much as I do.

The zombi triceratops made an appearance about 4 years ago, but is well worth (?)reviving.//Good ideas on unifying skeletons - I agree with the dragonsnail problem, and have my own doubts about dream-dragons, which I feel would fade away when the True Dragon ceased to animate them.

Comment on Different Worlds 28 to Mike Kelly

For literary source with casual and commonplace resurrections, see Mike Moorcock's End of Time trilogy.//This et is a way of bypassing the DW letters page.

Robert Saunders: re TC - if you have TC24 or more recent that should have the address, but I'll give it here - 15 Highlands Way, Stamford, Lincs (name of John Drake) - I hope that's all correct, because that's all off the top of my head. I agree about the quality, but since they were nice enough to ask me for material when reviving TC, and as it costs me nothing due to contribution credits, I don't really care.

Ian Engle - see also my comment to Daniel James.//There's really no problem with the Rrs - provided that ones own race has outgrown such childish habits as living on planets, such expansion can be tolerated as merely a juvenile excess. There's more than enough cubic in each system, and otherwise wasted resources, for such a race never to have to compete with you. One problem with realism in SF games - you can't just apply it selectively.//A current argument against the existence of other kilfers in this galaxy is that it is foreseeable technology to produce a self-replicating contact probe. Within 10^8 years, successive generations travelling at only 0.1% c would have filled the Galaxy - every system would have a probe in waiting for someone to talk to. A nasty variant is if the first race to do so built berserkers instead. That would prevent intelligence from getting anywhere even if common.

LoF XXXI.4

Martin Wixted: That system, for a topped out fighter, who uses everything at its fastest speed, per unit time, deals out damage in the following ratios
Dagger 10, Staff 7, Shortsword 6 and Longsword 6.

This makes dagger a minimax choice, unless you have absorptive armour - 1pt changes things to 6:5:4:3:5, 2pt 3:3:3:4. Very strange things happen.

I presume your 'rather fast and bloody' comment is in comparison with D&D in which weapon damages average at D6 not D8, and your to-hit's go up. Without knowing what HP, armour &c do in this system, and what you are using as a base, the concept of speed and bloodiness is rather vague. It is slower than, and less bloody than, an NPC vs NPC system I've seen used - each roll D20, lower roll dies.

I also find your speeds in seconds slow compared with reality, and limited by the 1s quantum so that continuity is hindered. And I still say that your 1s quantum is a melee round, but now blows take several rounds to complete, not just 1.

General Chat

Last weekend (the Halloween weekend) I actually ran a game, being the first time I've GM'd a group for 2¹/₂ years, and over 3¹/₂ years since I last did so on a consistent basis. Just goes to show the false pretences I've been working under.

This was the open game I discussed last time, which in the end had 12 players and 26 PCs, of various sorts. As I had hoped, the sheer bizarre range of PCs, few of whom had met during play before - many made up for the occasion - promoted a good three hours role-play while players and PCs arrived. Falain, the carnivorous plant caused quite a stir, with his disparaging comments about "Animals!" . . .

Unfortunately I then had to try and point the players in the direction of the adventure I'd thought up. The game broke into two sessions - in the first, having been told that they had been summoned ("You mean I've been Gated? Fame, at last!", cried Fortash, the Willpower 37 Enchanter) to help defeat the forces of disorder and chaos, part of the party had to perform Steve Marsh's Blue Moon heroquest, for inner harmony, and the rest undergo a heroquest for the Golden Barge (from Moorcock), which goes as follows:

Go to major river; intent on finding the barge. Wait. Eventually the party will be attacked by minor monsters (I used the trollkin from the Munchrooms) which symbolize mundane distractions. These come from upstream. From the second round of melee, anyone who faces downstream and makes a Spot Hidden will see the barge in the far distance. The party must disengage and follow.

The chase will take them through shadow, and eventually the river will enter a cavern, with only a narrow path on their side. Blocking this path sits a cloaked figure who will ask Nysaâr riddles, until three have been answered. This symbolizes getting into the right frame of mind. The Riddler is Umar at'Tawil, a guise of Yog-Sothoth. PCs who get cute get vaporized.

Finally to appease the battle happy, the party must overcome the forces of Chaos - anything not a trivial challenge - I used the Eternal Battle, even though the HE grenades from the RAM-GL on the Trav air raft made shortwork of the Avatar of Chaos. The PCs can then catch up with the barge, which is also the ship from 'Sailor on the Sea of Fate'. The Helmsman will take you as close as possible to where you are travelling going through the Mittelmarches (Warhound and the World's Pain), but without having to be damned.

The BlueMoon heroquesters were then able to rejoin the other party, by being reborn there with the Barge, and then they sailed across the Sea of Fate to the Source of Harmony. This involved sailing up a river to near Heaven. First they had to get to the river - the big gun from Harpoon was here, but got jammed by a Glue 3 cast with POW 21, and the archers and the rest dispersed by HE grenades and dragon breath.

That left the Chaos army, which was intended to really ruin the party - so I threw krarshtkids and Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath and the Mutation gang and more at them, and was starting to worry them, but was having difficulty hitting them for any damage. Then, it being only 20 mins short of the deadline I intended to stop for, I had the helmsman announce that the forest on the horizon was their goal.

ApF XXXI.5

Now Falain, who had ~~not~~ already been there and found nothing hadn't been on the Blue Moon quest. It took a little while for this to sink in, so the Helmsman pointed this out. Those of you who've read Warhound will recognise the forest, the house there, and the clay cup that is the Holy Grail, and how when Jenny teleported back with it, the Chaos army fell apart, the Krarshtkids burrowing down, the others wandering away.

Then the Barge sailed back and they took the Grail to the king who had summoned them - and it was proved again how difficult dramatic death scenes are in FRP with Heal Body, Cure All Disease and Resurrection about. The PCs then woke up in their own bodies, with only the experience and the Heroquest bonuses to their name - That nearly caused a revolt - 12 hours gaming and no money or Magic items.

Now this was all rank powergaming (Multi-missile 4 on HE grenades, flying MUs with lightning-bolt wands strafing into armies), but most of the time, the combats could be avoided - certainly the first part of the Barge-quest and the Chaos army required running from the combat for success. And despite my attempts to provide a credible opposition for the party, I failed miserably - instead of the Dark Young, I would have needed the Mother Herself, or Great Cthulhu, to seriously challenge that party, and during the final battle I was having to conceal the fact that I was scarcely in control of the situation, despite all that, at the end, people came and congratulated me for a fun weekend, and Karen for the endless supply of chilli she conjured on Saturday night and putting up with them all.

Somehow, I think that serious gaming, while having its place, just like reading newspapers, or The Book of the New Sun, is not everything. In fact now, with the old group dispersed, gaming has to be fun to bring us together. Despite the unusually intense roleplaying at the start of the mission, when characters were just trying to get adjusted to each other (with the superheroes from contemporary Earth making Hitchhikers' jokes at each other - "It must be a Thursday"), that run was only partly serious - it had to be light-hearted to be more than a grind of mechanics despite being feasibly runnable in a serious campaign context. In short, the game has to reward the investment in the short term first - although I expect that run to grow in the telling, and become part of the folklore, which will reward the effort it cost me.

In fact it now amazes me that I ever had the stamina to run weekly for a group of eight, with 15-20 PCs active.

Mechanics notes: AD&D to RQ - AD&D stats above 18 convert to RQ by 18+n going to 18+6n for RQ. This works for STR for giants if STR=SIZE, and uniformity helps us for the other stats.

High-roll wins used to settle attack vs parry or dodge of equal level (normal vs normal, special vs special etc) enables those at 100+ - and the pure FTRs were at 105 - 165 - to go through creatures with defenses of 60% or so with ease - any roll of 61-95 hits except vs a special or critical defense. If you wish this to happen, it succeeds excellently.

D&D permanent items were the biggest single bias between D&D and RQ fighters, even when toned down to RQ power levels. There will never be a satisfactory out from this problem.

I think it all goes to prove my new beliefs "Good gaming is what you enjoy!"

Games Days - as usual the only event of worth was the bar, where I met Alison Brooks, David Flin, Daniel James, David Webb, Robert Saunders, Pat or Clarke, Nick Larter, Paul Mason, Vaughan Allen, Nick Kinzett, Dave Waring, and probably a couple of others whose names escaped me after a few pints. Mike Lewis was upstairs in the main hall making money, and thus not seen in the bar.

New stuff - Manual II was out - better cover, worse contents than ever, DW31 was there, and looked extremely bland. Not surprising that FRP only peripherally entered the serious conversation.

a fanzine written, typed, and copyrighted (c) in 1983 by Rob Heinsoo
address: Box 82, Reed College Portland, OR 97202 phone: (503) 774-9444

Episodes and ideas from Herodotus' The Histories

(Book I, 25) Under siege by the Lydians, the Ephesians ran a rope from Ephesus' walls to the temple of Artemis a mile away to put the town under the goddess' protection. Artemis' protection didn't save Ephesus from the Lydians, but it might have been more effective in a F. world of worldly gods:

1. Run a rope to Artemis' temple and what do you get?
2. A POWER line!

(Book II, 90) The Egyptians considered the bodies of men, women, and even foreigners who drowned in the Nile or were killed by its crocodiles to be sacred. Only the priests of the Nile could touch such bodies, which were elaborately embalmed and buried in consecrated ground.

(Book V, 36) Histiaeus of Miletus, an Ionian Greek who sometimes served the Persians, tattooed a message urging a friend to revolt against the Persian Empire on the shaven scalp of his most trusted servant. When the servant's hair had grown back, Histiaeus sent him through Persian territory with instructions to tell the friend he was being sent to to shave his hair off and look at his head.

(Book 2, ?) I can no longer find this episode so I may have the details wrong.) Angered by a city-state's refusal to give in to his demands, a king threatened to cut the city down "like a pinetree." According to Herodotus, the pine tree is the only tree that doesn't send up new roots after being felled...

Something completely different

One entrance to a temple of the Blue Oyster cult is blocked by a huge boulder made of some sort of metal. Initiates of the cult are taught that the door within the heavy metal rock will open for groups of three or more that successfully perform the ritual described below.

first element: pound on the rock to create a steady beat

second element: use instrument or voice to create a single melodic line, which may be nothing more than a progression of three or four chords

third: scream a violent or disgusting phrase as loud as possible. "Gonna raise Hell!", "Eat your mother!", and similar sentiments will do

Acts of violence increase the ritual's potency, and are nearly mandatory for groups of lesser competence. Appropriate acts of violence include destroying a musical instrument, biting off an animal's head, and using a captive's head to pound the beat.

-783

One way of rationalizing D&D style experience systems that award "experience points" for killing things is to reason that PCs and other experience gainers are psychic vampires that somehow absorb the life energy of beings they slay. Thieves and magic users who kill orcs increase in ability to take damage and pick pockets or cast spells because they absorb some of the slain orcs' life energy.

'Undead' that drain experience/life levels fit this interpretation uncomfortably easily.

Gems and coins possess a strangely renewable type of life energy that is somewhat harder to explain.

THE ALABASTER ALBATROSS #14

a zinetype contribution from Simon J. Cornelius, the ever Itinerant, which is copyright (c) 1984. I can be most easily contacted via the home of my parents, i.e. 84 Glenfield Dr., Great Doddington, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN9 7TE, England. Telephoning (0933) 78536 will probably allow you to avail yourself of my latest phone number. This zine is neatly retyped by LEE and probably translated into American.

What has happened recently? Games DAY, well, what an occasion. I was working on the first day and spent only 3.5 hours of the second day attending, mostly in the bar or playing Railway Rivals (Scottish accent obligatory unless you are Welsh). To sum up: of little excitement. Most people go to see the new products. As I now work in a games shop, this is frankly boring. The best part of the day was meeting A&E type people. The obligatory list: the charming Alison Brooks, the tall Dave Flin, the Scottish Robert Saunders and Harry Robertson plus Kevin Reader and Mike Lewis and the Oxford/Sillwood casualties.

I'll now admit this is only a commentzine. I toyed with the idea of a separate name for such things but decided it was better to get the Albatross up to a truly awesome issue number.

COMMENTS ON A&E #98

ROB ELLWOOD: re weekly expenses table: an extremely good idea but it may not be enough to impress upon players that things happen in the unplayed interim, especially if like me you run rarely (the present situation). Some penalty to status, respect from the guard, etc. should accrue if the standard of living is not maintained.//If all else fails, read the rules.

ROBERT LOUTZENHISER: re shock: rather interesting. Unfortunately Shock isn't very heroic.

ROBERT PLAMONDON: Silverlock left me quite cold. Is there something there that an Englishman wouldn't appreciate or even notice.

PETE CLARKE: re Annecy: This is the material we want: real occupation breakdowns.

JTS (Dragonsgold 18) re ct self: This comment comes into two categories. First, I stand by the comment that if fewer females buy armor (smaller market) than men, then it will be more expensive. If humanoid monsters who can be looted for armor are almost always male, then this supply is less available. Assuming female-fitting armor is different from male-fitting, then females will on average be in a lower armor class. I was perfectly serious about this. However, secondly, the comment was meant humorously. American humor does differ from British, and it seems to us that Americans have less of a sense of humor. While I agree that the skimpy armor seen in the illustrations is ridiculously impractical, we don't take such things to heart, i.e. we don't get so worked up. There are far fewer rabid feminists or religious fanatics over here.

NICK LARTER: in an attempt to keep the Giant Arthropod debate going, a debate I might say that has been amazingly free of slanging, etc., I'll make this comment re cts on same: if moulting occurs continuously, so does muscle growth creeping up the apodemes (projections) which are growing at the cuticle and dissolving at the inner end.//Earlier you suggested an increased pressure of oxygen to allow for greater size by improving diffusion. A rough mental calculation suggests that this might have to be a partial pressure of 1500 Torr, ten times present Earth pressure and twice atmosphere. This will affect the properties of sound and chemistry, amongst things.

HARRY ROBERTSON: re 1/2" humans freezing. The smallest mammal in the UK, the pygmy shrew, is only this size and can manage. He uses a lot of energy to keep warm and has fur. Assuming the human was clothed, I guess he could stay alive for, say, half an hour at room temperature. If the outside temperature was around 30°C, heat loss wouldn't be too serious, and just eating a lot of food and wrapping up well should work. These are guesses, remembering that the area to height ratio would decrease by about 10,000 times. Hang on, that sounds as though we haven't got a chance with a temperature gradient across the skin of more than a few celsius, given a lot of food. Of course, humans would only freeze if outside temperatures were below freezing point. Humans would die because reactions in the body were progressing too slowly.

In general, although 98 had the debut of a number of writers, it just doesn't seem very comment-worthy. I have, however, managed a page and a bit on my tripe-writer.

COMMENTS ON #99: more than 50% British (including April Lee as an honorary Briton) and therefore we made it.

LEE: I was including in this rough conversion rate the cost of commission and postage to the UK. When these are taken into account it buys what \$1 does.

MARK LEWIS: Hi again. Re IMAGINE vs WHITE DWARF: the staff of 22 Oxford St, Games Centre seems to prefer the latter. Both are pretty awful and push D&D. At least WD covers a lot more systems than Imagine: e.g. Bushido, RQ, Traveller in the latest issue.

BILL KARIÉVA: re ct to ROB SAUNDERS: How in your campaign do you keep magic away from the populace so they hold it to be mere myth? Incidentally, is a myth a female moth?

STEVE GILHAM: re Tiphareth: good but I enjoyed "Ashes to Ashes" more, probably because of the less typical setting.

QUENTIN LONG: Please put your name at the top of the zine. Also don't use words of non-English like "fen" without explaining them.

RONALD MARK PEHR: re 221 Baker St: an excellent and easy to sell game, certainly an improvement on Cluedo (=Clue in USA?). // Re ct to self: The empire is very clever and efficient. The people at the top have some very advanced ideas on how to control the country. Whilst it is feudal, it is not as repressive as medieval England. This is partly due to religions which have some "magical" power. I can't say any more about the political set-up.

MARK GOLDBERG: re ct to self: thanks for the pat on the back re giant arthropods. As Nick and I have said a lot on this subject already, I'll therefore say a few things about the general nature of the animal kingdom.

There are approximately 28 phyla recognized, of which 17 have less than 1,000 known species. The total described species number perhaps 1.3M. However, estimates of the number of undescribed species of insects alone recently were 15-20M. Most of these are indistinguishable by eye. However, these figures give some idea as to how complex the natural communities of planets should be. It is quite possible that there are many animal extracts of immense value to man that will never be discovered because the species are extinct.

Most of the phyla of the animal kingdom are marine and therefore not readily translatable to the typical FRP campaign. Worms (a term covering members of a number of phyla) are rather neglected in campaigns. They could be intelligent, perhaps fungus farming. They would be very vulnerable to breaches of their fluid cavity, which is pressurized and acts as the skeleton (i.e. a hydrostatic skeleton).

DAVE FLIN: I had a comment worked out for you about Nick Larter's campaign, but since then you have met Nick and no doubt resolved the question. Nick's campaign reminds me of Chalker's Well World series in its changes of location.//On the oil question (again spurred by a ct to Nick): primarily I refer you to DEATHWORLD II by Harry Harrison. In this a degenerate remnant of humanity on a backward planet extracts oil from close to the surface deposits in a desert. In my campaign, this is a gnomish occupation. The lightest fractions of the distillation are very valuable and inflammable. Oil from living organisms is generally of low volatility but this is not necessarily so; some venoms are, I believe, stored in volatile oil (by snakes?). Animals in colder climates would have body fats which at room temperature would be quite volatile. Magically existing creatures could easily be sources of "petrol."

PETE CLARKE: re ct to PETER DA SILVA: The campaign had better start up again or there will be trouble. Some people have waited for a year and a half for a new leg, and the wait must be worthwhile. Anyway, who will stop Tarsk if we do nothing about it.//Re ct self re trap: I didn't say it had been foiled, because I didn't remember that it had been. On reflection you are right. A lot of people were making very jammy trap rolls that afternoon.//Re legionaires and magic: they don't have protection from magic because up to now they have been deployed in non-magic areas. Because the empire has expanded as far as it can in the non-magic areas, it must now go north. Therefore, people who are very daring and even desperate will be of great use.

PETER DA SILVA: An excellent characteristics list. I have toyed with the idea of splitting up characteristics into groups, as have many others. However, the direct correspondence of characteristics in different groups is new to me. I will be converting to LoA when it arrives (how is that for prejudgement?), because I'm fed up with using incomplete systems; otherwise I would be tempted to adopt this classification.//One quibble is Piety as the Health characteristic of Spirit. Piety has religious connotations which are restrictive and unrealistic. I'm not sure what to name it instead; something along the lines of "humanity," though the term is inappropriate.

SCOT FRITZ: Dwarves are ursoid....Novel. What is their sex ratio? Genetically, sex-allocation theory suggests that in diploid sex-determining species and any non-social species, equal resources should be invested in either sex. I used to have 3:1 ratio until I thought about it. It has been changed (fortunately this has no effect on the players). Ursoids would reflect this. It is possible for non-reproduction in an individual to be a good survival strategy, as long as relatives are helped to reproduce instead. Such a pattern would be especially true in species which live in extremely harsh environments, such as mountains. I feel an article coming on which will help sort out my whole ideas about dwarves. Wait a couple of issues, and you may see it.

GENERAL: 1) Does anyone out there play C&S any more? I've seen virtually nothing in these pages on C&S II.

2) The PBZ is taking up too much of the zine: eight pages in #98. Whilst a good idea initially and interesting when people were detailing the contents of their abodes, it is now repetitive and uninteresting to non-participants. It would be better run as PBM. The above is only my opinion, and to be honest I expect that I won't get my wish. I will bow to the majority and promise not to protest any more.

Wishing everyone a prosperous New Year. Cheers.

Welcome to the first zine I have ever inflicted anywhere. This calls for some background information. I've been playing role playing games for as long as I care to remember--and have been wargaming for a bit longer than that. I collect books (mainly SF/F) and like listening to music ~~and would like to meet someone of similar interest~~. Anything else relevant? Oh, I'm 17 and in the wonderful education system

There will be no comments this, as the last issue of A&E I have is #87. That, I imagine is somewhat behind, so any comments would be rather dated; therefore no comments. What will there be? Depends really on length; as Games Day was a few days ago there may be a report; there will be a couple of zine reviews (as is customary Games Day saw the purchase of many zines).

What games do I play? In the roleplaying vein, I sometimes DM AD&D and play GOLDEN HEROES, the best superhero game on the market, which I heartily recommend. I play most other games at various times and play a D&D/RQ game by post. In wargaming, I stick mainly to Fantasy for figure games; in boardgaming I will play virtually anything. Of all purchasable RPGs, I find AD&D the most playable, as the rules are simple; it is easy to play with just the combat tables and a player's handbook; anything that common sense can't explain is usually covered somewhere in the DMG. Why is simplicity so important? It allows the players (and DM) to roleplay to the maximum without having to constantly refer to the rules. This is surely the whole point of roleplaying: petty things like realism can be ignored when they get in the way of playability.

Complete change of direction: the aforementioned zine reviews.

RAPSCALLION: an FRP and postal games zine. Issue 1 contained plenty of interesting chat, a very interesting column for Call of Cthulhu, zine reviews, and the house rules for two PBM games. There is also some of the best art I have seen in a zine. Well worth the mere 35p it costs. From Steve Norledge, 75 Hawkhurst Way, W. Wickham, Kent.

DEMONS DRAWL: Issue 2. I wish I didn't have it. It is about the most uninteresting zine I have. There is an uninspired AD&D adventure, some very plain magic items, the Seer (an MUD sub-class, yawn) and more golems (just what the game needed!). There are some fairly decent new spells and a couple of okay articles, one on cops in Traveller, the other on Orcs in RQ. Still, it was only 35p and is available from 49 Longdown Rd., Congleton, Cheshire, England. Send a SAE with your money.

TEMPESTUOUS ORIFICE: the cream of the crop, the best zine I have read in recent months. Issue 3 is the latest and was very Cthulhu, with a good review of the rules and a well thought out adventure. Also a great deal of good ideas, and some figure reviews. The best thing about this zine is that it avoids the junky space fillers (monsters and magic items) that litter many other zines and has a general professional approach. A gem, easily worth the 50p (+5p post) to UK buyers, 80p by surface or £1.10 by air mail to overseas buyers; from Patrick Fama, 15 York Close, Morden, Surrey.

WEREMAN (Issues 6+7), an A4 zine, which concentrates on AD&D, Traveller and RQ, producing articles of good quality. The scenarios are well thought out, if not amazingly original. In general, worth trying, from Roger Barb, South Lawn, Eton College, Windsor, Berks, England--for the paltry sum of 50p.

Well, enough of zines (other people's, that is) and on to greater depths of excitement. Some details of my campaign perhaps? It's at a standstill at the moment with people dropping out of gaming, either through lack of time or loss of interest. I don't play so much myself due to impending exams. The last RPG I played was a Golden Herces adventure I ran at a London games club about a month ago. This was, as always, a great deal of fun, especially when the chief villain slipped flat on his back two rounds in a row, allowing the previously flattened heroes to gain the upper hand. How many people play superhero RPGs? Would anyone be interested in scenario outlines and villains?

Now a swift change of tack, to matters Cthulhu. I don't play Cthulhu with ~~Runequest~~ Call of Cthulhu, but I have had many fun adventures with a set of rules based on an article called (I think) Towards a Fourth Generation RPG, in A&E way back. As the rules I use are based a lot on ~~1s~~, there is not a lot of difference in mechanics between CofC and them. (I imagine the main difference is in the magic.)

My best fun has been had roleplaying in horror-type scenarios of the 1920s, with some classic deaths. One priest was thrown from a window to a crowd of Innsmouth types, in league with a Deep One; that was the end of him! So far the worst the players have met are ghouls and Deep Ones and creatures of similar power, which is more in the sense of the stories than meeting Cthulhu. (That would be a terminal adventure.) There has been the gleening of a little magic (Isn't it a shame so few people can read that primitive form of Latin/Greek/French/etc. so many magical tomes seem to be written in?). And there have been some great characters created (one reason I like GMing; I like to see what everyone else can come up with). And then, just as things were becoming really exciting, ...the holidays ended, and gaming virtually ceased. Ah well.

I think there is just room on this page for a legend from my D&D campaign, so we'll finish with that.

The Ship of Zantlekal

This ship, a large galley, is the source of many legends, most of them unpleasant. It is grey, with huge black sails. On its bow, it bears in blood-red, the word HAXZOG. An unpleasant smell accompanies it.

The ship has been seen at various times in all the seas of the world; it occasionally comes into a port. The crew consists of sixty trolls, who work the two tiers of oars; a demon (Type III) who is first mate, and Zantlekal, who is a Beholder. The ship can sail any sea, water, lava, or even the ethereal sea between the seas. None know if it can sail the sea of time.

The ship may be boarded by any ~~bold~~ brave enough; there is no charge for transportation, but there is no guarantee of where one may end up. Each day, all non-crew members must save vs magic or lose 1 HP permanently. This is due to the anger of the Gods. The ship was cursed to sail forever by the Gods, after the crew caused their displeasure by refusing to carry out an order. (None know WHAT they refused to do; there are many guesses, of course. There's possible adventure there.)

From time to time, the Gods use the ship to their own ends. But mainly it sails the seemingly aimless course the Gods set it. (Of course it is not aimless, but who knows the reasons of the Gods?)

So what use is it? Well, my campaign is set on many small worlds, travel between which is easy if you can teleport, which most low level characters can't.... So the ship was invented to provide inter-planar travel. The crew is so formidable because the people I was playing with at the time would steal ANYTHING! Take it or leave it.

That's enough for now. All that remains is to thank Lee Gold for stenciling this, and you for reading it....Back soon.

I've just read Lovecraft's Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath and will never, ever have an unkind word to say about ghouls from this day forth, but all that has precisely nothing to do with this zine which is

MONTMORILLONITE MAN-O-WAR BIRD installment the 5th by and (c) 1984 Nick Larter of Sillwood Park, Ascot, BERKS, England, translated from gibbering and meeping into American by Lee Gold, for which my hearty thanks.

A&E #97

ROB ELLWOOD: I loved the random Bengal Tiger generator, and I reckon a similar device will be sprung on my own unsuspecting RPG group before very long. For some perverse reason, I'm reminded of a friend's dungeon where every chest seemed to contain X million hostile centipedes, but that's another story.

VINCENT FOSTER: welcome to A&E, and what a wonderful thing I thought your discourse on Berserks was. This primal scream thing is bizarre; I can imagine a lot of adversaries being well and truly scared off without a blow being laid when confronted by a bunch of Norseman screaming thus.//A couple of miscellaneous thoughts about screaming women also come out of this. First, do female dwarves have to scream a lot to make their beards grow. If so, a reasonable corollary would be that dwarven families have lots of rows, which is why the old man is always trogging down the mine for months on end. The rarity of a quiet and blissful marriage amongst dwarves would be instantly given away on account of the wife's chin being akin to a nipper's botty.// Another thought: do these tribeswomen who put numerous rings over their necks to stretch them have to scream a lot to make room for more of them?

PETER DA SILVA: Do we have to start calling children saplings as well?

A&E 99

ME (re: News from Tess): yes, I know I didn't explain the rationale behind which stats I use to decide who fazes whom when two parties meet on the floors and ceilings of Tess. I decided that the combination of SAN, INT, WIS, Mental FP and PEP was the best for me and my system, but if anyone decides to adopt any of the principles of Tess, it's up to them to decide how they want to evaluate such encounters, and not for me to impose any system. I was trying to make more of a point on how to handle such encounters descriptively, including their outcome, although I considered that including the numerical side of things would better present a complete picture of how the encounters might work, for the benefit of those interested.

APRIL LEE: I liked the cover, sort of dated and woodcutty.

MIKE DAWSON & DAVID NALLE: nice attempt to turn #99 into the Ambrose Bierce issue.

DANIEL JAMES: come over and chew some fly agaric some time.

MIKE DAWSON: I liked your little compendium of funny words, but I can't help thinking that one or two are quite well-known really; I mean, I'd heard of them.

Erlking: I'm sure this must come straight out of German legend, as immortalized in a well-known Franz Schubert lied, and probably lots of other places as well.//Fossick If A&E has a circulation among Australian opal hunters, you'd probably have sack upon sack of irate mail by now, because when these people dig the small holes they do when hunting for said opals, they call it fossicking. I could go on, but I shall leave further comment to our Australian friends in A&E who are probably much more versed in the matter than I.

DAVID FLIN (re ct to me): I fail to believe that in a fantasy world there is not some way to produce small quantities of flammable hydrocarbons in the petroleum range. Let them be called magic oil, if you like, and price them accordingly, but I

do think that they would be there. I'll also postulate a microbiological solution along the following lines: let's assume there's a type of bacteria that uses crude oil as an energy source. We then have the option of suggesting that certain metabolic processes split the longer chain fractions into shorter chain units, some of which are excreted--or that some elements of the original crude pass through the organism unassimilated. Certain people could then make it their profession to culture the organism, and market the excreted fractions at an appropriate price. Naturally, the very nature of the product means such a profession would be risky, and so such a business will not be found in built up urban areas. Moreover, the mortality rate in the profession would not be low; one can envisage a set of cultures going up in flames, while the proprietor lies tucked up in bed, to be discovered a charred husk the following morning.

There is a further problem: namely how do we rationalize the existence of such an organism. Obviously the production of flammable products must confer some kind of adaptive advantage on the little bug. If we assume that in the natural state a stray spark will send the whole colony up in flames from time to time, what good is this? I'd suggest that normally the bug is totally vegetative in its reproduction. Such vegetative cells, not being resistant to adverse environments, could not survive outside the immediate crude oil environment, being quickly dessicated in the sun and wind, and bursting due to unfavorable osmotic effects when water was present in the substrate. A sudden burst of flame and heat when the colony catches fire alters all this, however. The heat activates dormant sexual processes which initiate the tremendously rapid formation of resistant spores. When the fire has gone out, a few spores will germinate and restart the vegetative colony. The vast majority will be carried away on the hot air and smoke, to air currents which will disperse them far and wide. Spores landing in pools of crude will germinate to start fresh colonies; spores that do not will survive dormant for many many years, until the chance arrival of some crude triggers germination.

DAVID NALLE: I tend to agree with you on Thieves Guilds and the ilk. Would an organization that was ripping off its next door neighbor come right out into the open about it in a volatile dark ages city? I think not.

Nevertheless, guilds do form an integral part of my campaign, modified in two ways from the archetypal guild system. First, in a large city I believe there is room for a guild to work, though there would be little surface evidence of it. That an underworld existed would only be clear when one was versed enough in the politics and machinations of the place to spot the worms of Camorra-like corruption eating through the foundations. There might even be room for Chicago-style fights between rival guilds or factions, as you suggest. My Secretarial guilds are quite open, because in those places they are open there is little or no underhand activity going on; such activity will be the work of the guild in the next province or--if there are Gates nearby--somewhere else altogether. The home guild is quite able to provide suitable training in these operations, and a large part of the work is obtaining supplies of foreign currency plus real or forged papers for going unnoticed in said raids.

Closer to home the guildsmen act as a sort of militia or police force, ridding the town of unwanted nuisances and patrolling for the raids of neighboring guilds. The suspicious death of any respected townsman might see the guild using its skill and knowledge to investigate the crime: e.g. experts tracing the history of the weapon used or doing forensic tests or poison typing, etc. The more covert activities in foreign parts might not be immediately revealed to new members.

MARC WILLNER (re Anti-Realism): In the manner of Le Grande Macabre, I would rather say that I indulge in anti-anti-realism, but no matter: each to his own. When Interplanar travel occurs, many things become transmuted. Is there any guarantee that the change will be useful? I think not: the number of curdled potions, perished silks and embrittled Irons my campaign has produced is ample evidence of this. My point is that things thus transformed are likely to be rare, owing to the infrequency

of Interplanar travel, and may thus take on some value, not necessarily as a currency but as some curio or widget or a tektite falling from space.

Consider further, though: If we assume that each substance that can be transformed is turned into something equally unique in the new world, then things that are scarce in this world will retain their scarcity (and hence probably some sort of value) in the next world, whatever they are turned into, simply because the quantity being transmuted in the first place is small. Violation of this law may provide catastrophic repercussions in some distant world: e.g. the GP of world A are transformed into small piles of grey ash when one travels to world C, but world C has mountain upon mountain of said ash, so intrepid traveller B starts shipping the ash from C to A by the barrow-load, and the resulting surfeit of gold quite upsets the economy.

D. M. SHORT: what wonderful things you write. What else can I say (but praise)? I really felt for those trees (but that does no justice at all....)....

Whew! This was getting to a bit of a commentzine, and grave doubts have I about such a phenomenon being the best fate for my scanty pennies; here's an occasional leaf from TMMB Arts Supplement (formerly TAA Arts Supplement), with a few words on a couple of films.

EL TOPO (The Mole); dir. Alexandro Jodorowsky (Mexican, 1971)

A real one-man show this, as Jodorowsky not only directed, wrote the script, and composed the music but also starred in this bizarre fantasy western about the fortunes of a black-clad Eastwoodian gunfighter. I'd guess it would provide a wealth of ideas for anyone into Western FRP, as well as a fantasy campaign a bit out of the ordinary.

The first half of the film (after a "Fistful of Dollars" intro) concerns the efforts of the gunfighter to track down and defeat four "Masters," so he may become a Master himself. The Masters are no ordinary gunfighters, however; there is a rabbit-keeping pacifist, a terrifying lethargic gypsy coppersmith, a martial arts monk, and a wise old sage. In one incredible scene, the gunfighter, on the trail of the pacifist, wanders into an enclosure full of rabbits, who immediately begin to drop dead all around him.

I won't give away how his quest to become a Master turns out, but the second half of the film deals with the gunfighter being waylaid and left for dead (so, he survives his quest then? Maybe he does; maybe he is resurrected in some outre fashion; see the film and find out), only to wake up after a long period of dormancy in some deep underground realm, strangely transformed into a penitent and Messiah of the horrendously deformed race that inhabit the place (probably a bunch of inbred humans), being The Mole charged with trying to get them to the surface, where the Wild West awaits them if they succeed.

El Topo is a wonderful fantasy film, a sort of cross between A Fistful of Dollars, Kung Fu, and Eureka--and not one for the squeamish; so track it down if you can. As a postscript, Jodorowsky was the one who in 1974 had the film rights to and attempted to make Dune, but of course the money for his epic conception of the oeuvre just wasn't there, as "ecology had not become a box-office commodity." More recently Jodorowsky surfaced with a typical tale in Heavy Metal magazine, providing the script for The Incal Light, which was drawn by Moebius.

BARON MUNCHHAUSEN; dir. Karel Zeman (Czechoslovakia)

Not a film I've seen yet, but in view of the press the guy has been getting in recent A&Es, I reckon a lot of readers will be interested. It stars Milos Kopecky as the Baron and combines live action with artwork and special effects in (apparently) a "unique and breathtaking style." Well, the Czechs did make "Fantastic Planet," so if they can strike gold once, they can do it again.

CAMPAIGN REPORT

SO FAR: Our heroes have just arrived in the land of Zamor, where in an unpleasant altercation with the law, Varg is taken into custody on suspicion of madness. Meanwhile the others seek out the local dentist to try and get Estel's hand sewn back on.

The dentist, a rather inebriated fellow with a big axe, agrees to do what he can for Estel, for the appropriate payment. Estel is rendered suitably unconscious, and the guy sets to work cleaning the wound with copious amounts of the local spirit. The dentist is strangely aware of Estel's mental powers and suggests he uses his telekinetic ability to make all the circulatory, neural and muscular connections between his arm and the severed hand. Estel is quick to realize that with the correct mental control, he will be able to detach his hand at will and--using it as an avatar of his telekinetic persona (what!?)--get it to do all the swordfighting at a nice, safe distance, as well as performing numerous other Secretarial deeds. The dentist is unable to do anything about Lyra's consumption, but recognizes the need for a quick cure and tells the party about a great sage who lives only a few miles away in Castle Rathmar, who will certainly be able to do something.

Meanwhile, back at the jail, Varg is getting bored with his incarceration and, in typical style, decides to do something about it. The gaoler is promptly Charmed and--upon releasing him--is equally promptly dispatched. Varg makes good his escape and meets up with the others who are looking around the village and have just reached the Temple of Methras where the bloodstained altars silently speak of heinous worship.

They hurry back to the hotel and prepare to leave the village, but news arrives that the deed has been discovered and the militia is out in force with tracker dragons. Varg is rapidly disguised, his blue cloak reversed to expose the red lining. He is also coated in garlic juice to throw the dragons off the scent, although his protests are strong. They then separate and arrange to meet up on the road north-east of the village on the way to Castle Rathmar.

The ruse works, and they meet as arranged and head off to Castle Rathmar, confident that they are not being followed. Meeting the sage will be even more opportune now, as Estel has come down with some disease also, probably as a result of his recent surgery.

Arriving at the castle gate without further incident, the group states its business and is surprised to learn that they are expected. They are swiftly admitted and then ushered in to the sage's cabin in the castle enclosure. The blue-liveried guards leave, and a few quick words see Lyra and Estel divorced from their respective ills.

The conversation moves to other things, and it becomes clear the sage knows a good deal about their quest and about Hantivari, even though the group tend to furnish their information reluctantly. How the sage aligns himself to Hantivari and his kith is not clear, though Gustavius remembers the blue-clad militia-men encountered in the last homely inn in Lower Gath awhile back were fairly hostile to their cause. Since arriving in Zamor, the same hostility has not been evident; are the natives biding their time, or do they now not recognize our heroes as enemies?

The sage offers to pass a few comments on the gifts given the party by Hantivari. Lyra, it transpires, simply possesses a draught of healing. Estel now reveals that he offered his gift to Zongri, as a desperate bribe, during the heat of the last encounter in the cave on the way down from the mountain top. He therefore asks the sage if he can tell him anything of a "superior foil" he has in his possession and produces a neat-looking weapon. The sage takes it, and at once the blade glows invitingly and the sage tells Estel it is indeed magical. On being shown Alkar's orb the sage reiterates its purpose as related by Hantivari: namely to summon the great Drillog birds to carry the party away in their time of direst need. Varg then shows the sage his gift, a wolf-shaped talisman carved from solid moonstone (as befits a worshipper of Hati-Managarm, good job the others don't know this). The sage contemplates it smiling and then hands it back; "moonstone, the crystal child of the

Evening Wolf that will devour the Moon," he mutters, almost to himself. Gustavius requests no advice. (He sees no reason the sage should know about the couatl feather Pigus gave him, even though it has now miraculously turned to gold.)

To all who asked for advice the sage now gives a moonstone. Gustavius thus gets nothing, though with a bit of parting advice the sage tells him that divining devices are to be had at the coaching house on the road that divides the northern marches of Zamor from the lands of the Black Chasm. The lands of the northern marches belong to Count Rathmar of the Mark and are kept in order by his Margrave. Beyond the marches in the Mountains of Black Fire is the Hill of Rathmar, which has a great observatory atop it. The group elect to head towards the northern marches.

[Technical Discussion: with the players' usual skill, the snippet of information about the mountain observatory goes straight over their heads. I'd have thought it would be of at least passing relevance to their quest. But when they later met a dwarf from the Mountains of Black Fire, they didn't even quiz him about it. Moreover a little judicious magic from the sage (directed at Varg) and a few judicious gifts have successfully bought off or tied up four-fifths of the party for the foreseeable future, as we shall see. Gustavius, who did not succumb on this occasion, is even more finally neutralized a bit later on. Now back to the story.]

Our heroes leave Castle Rathmar and head along the road a few miles to the seething metropolis of Bocon, where they check into the Nag and Ducat, a goodly Inn. Among the customers is a blue-liveried woman with a pet dragon-like creature, which Gustavius quickly becomes convinced has strange mental powers. She slips Gustavius a note before joining more of her blue-liveried companions outside.

Meanwhile Varg meets and proceeds to swiftly chat-up the lovely Olga, who--with her trusty hound Fang--is new to these parts. Olga is a real lone-wolf and has a rare glint in her eye, and is probably highly attracted to Varg's arms, which have become finely hairy of late. They retire to their room early.

Meanwhile Gustavius announces his intention of going for a stroll and "acquiring some local knowledge." He leaves the inn, which is situated in the main square of the town next to a fine-looking hotel. There are stables and a farrier's office behind these. On the north side of the square is a rather impressive building of indeterminate purpose. Opposite the Inn (to the west) is the cemetery and some obviously religious buildings, of indeterminate deity. To the south are municipal buildings of a more secular nature. Gustavius heads off into the night.

The others settle down to a night of quietly imbibing the local Raven Ale, but their peace is soon disturbed by flashing lights and bells ringing outside in the square, and screams of terror from many people. "The Swarm, the Swarm!" they cry, and with that the first of many scorpions, ankheg-like insects, giant mosquitoes and numerous other nasties of compatible ilk flood into the bar. TO BE CONTINUED

CLOSING COMMENTARIUM

Well, here I am just back from GAMES DAY (both days of it). Special big hello to ROBERT SAUNDERS and HARRY ROBERTSON who made it down all the way from Edinburgh, and whom I seem to have consumed innumerable beers with over the two days. Hi also to DAVID FLIN, ALISON BROOKS, ALASDAIR MCINTOSH, BRIAN HAUNTON, PAUL MASON and PETE TAMLYN whose paths I crossed for the first time. Greetings again to old hands like STEVE GILHAM, KEVIN READER and DANIEL, DAVE, PETER and SIMON, and last but not least the non-contributors I ran into, of whom ALAN and GARETH, PETER WHEELDON (still good for parties) and IAN spring to mind.

A few quick thoughts on the event: good bar facilities, edible burgers, and the Railway Rivals man was there too. Victorian Adventure looks promising new FRP, and the Cthulhu Companion was on sale for the rip-off price of £4.95 and the extra special rip-off price of £6.95. Tschüss.

MOME RATHS #1 by Eric Sadoyama; retyped by Lee Gold (*thanks)

I suppose I should introduce myself. Having been introduced to D&D in 1977, I have since learned that the system one works with really makes no difference. The play's the thing.

I am 17 years old, born and raised in Hawaii, and am currently a Physics major at UC Berkeley. I mainly play AD&D, out of familiarity with the game, but will try anything once. I've played TFT, Traveller, C&S and Aftermath. I'm presently waiting for RQ3 to come out before looking at Chaosium's stuff. Currently, my efforts are towards the creation of a coherent world of my very own.

There have been a few things bothering me lately. First of all:

MAGIC AND WAR

Given a world where magic works, then what? Obviously things will be different. What happens to castle defenses when a spy can slip in, invisible and unseen? What use is the phalanx when airborne archers can pick off soldiers with little or no danger to themselves? How does one cope with mages who can scry enemy camps with ease and blow away entire platoons with a single fireball? In short, how does magic change the tactics of war?

Certainly I've seen people deal with limited parts of this problem--witness the recent discussion on invisible and teleporting troops. But has anyone ever examined the entire subject in depth? I invite any and all comments. Also....

GODS

I assume in my world that gods exist: supernatural beings of great power, who gain even more power through worship. I also assume that there exist several pantheons of gods, each worshipped by a separate culture/race. My question is this: can there be more than one sun god, more than one moon goddess? It would seem that the sun and moon must be the same, no matter where one lives in the world. Individual cultures may have their own storm gods, forest gods, and such, but could more than one deity control a specific body like the sun? Hmm, again comments? And, speaking of comments....

COMMENTS 98

DIEN: I like your history. What sort of time-scale does it cover? Centuries? Millennia? One of my major problems in creating a coherent world is in not knowing just how detailed to get.

DICK: Marsupial Dwarves? Weird, mister. Weird. But reasonable, I guess. I take it that marsupials are dominant on Khazad.

JOINER (re your Elves): a great concept but like all substantially non-human psychologies, how is a player to get into an elven mindset? Generally I find this a problem with radically different nonhumans; usually I keep the PCs human and only sketch out a few nonhuman NPCs. That way my nonhumans are not common and not familiar; when they do appear then, they're all the more alien and exotic.

PEHR (re lycanthropy): I always thought that many berserkers were lycanthropes (part 11.8.2 of your zine). Norse literature is full of 'em. Also, which animals do you allow as human-based lycanthropes? I'd suggest mammals only; cross-order transformation seems a bit strained.

CLARKE: Thanks for the Annecy writeup. I've never been really sure about the numbers and proportions in which an average town would have its craftsmen.

McINTOSH: Luck Points could also be used in reverse: e.g. curses et al. These could turn up at dramatic moments when they really matter, as a reminder to the PC.//See BUSHIDO for a treatment of reincarnation that can be used quite well for your continued in two pages--at the end of THE OTYUGH SPEAKS

THE OTYUGH SPEAKS #1

a truly tantalizing commentzine by Vincent Foster, 4010 Ashworth Ave. N.; Seattle, WA 98103; (206) 632-8822 or 633-0283 (call this one first, but do not be surprised if you get a recording; leave a message). Call after 6:30 PM or on weekends (do not even dream of calling collect). REtyped by Lee Gold (thanks, Lee).

Well, just recently I've decided to split the Otyugh Obituary into three parts. One will be called, oddly enough, The Otyugh Obituary and will cover general discussions on RPGs, role playing, ideas, and the like. A second will be dedicated to PBZs (not the Fritz one but the da Silva one at the moment; perhaps later to others which start up, if any more do), for which I have not decided upon a title. (I am thinking of something that has to do with Armadillos (see PBZ move in Otyugh Obituary #2), but if you can think of anything better, I'd be interested in hearing it.) The third is a commentzine called The Otyugh Speaks (just look at the top of the zine).

The reason for the split up is because I don't want my discussion and what-have-you zine to be interrupted by hordes of comments. And anyway, I wanted to try different titles for my zines. That being said, on to the comments--

A&E #99 (UK coup issue)

MIKE LEWIS: weird zine title

JIM VAUGHAN: I wouldn't doubt that Burchett has an M16; they are easy to come by in semiautomatic versions and easy to convert to full auto. (Just take a look at Soldier of Fortune, Gung Ho, Eagle, or even Guns and Ammo sometime.)

PHIL MASTERS: Good idea for Traveller Mages.

QUENTIN LONG: Hey, you forgot your name again. (Now you will have to look in the Table of Contents to find out; of course you could also look at the name attached to this comment.)

DAVE NALLE: Glad you figured out your zine number. (I wanted to know. I think you are #3 in number of zines in A&E. Sapientia #2, and Lee #1. I think Pehr is #4, but I'm less certain of that.)

MARTIN WIXTED: Roundless combat?! Heretic (big words from a fellow heretic)! It is a good idea. I'll try something similar when I rip-through modify my combat system for C&S.

DAVID JOHN WEBB: Thanks.

JAMES ROBERT: Wasn't Ig originally an Orc? When was he changed over? (Give me an issue number.) I ask because the only chronicles of Zonka I have read were the first ones (#72 or #73, I believe) and the more recent ones. (I do not own any A&Es between #73 and #96, exclusive of those two issues), and the Ig I remember was an orc.

JOSEPH TELLER: You forgot Basketry and Shorthand. PoP could really use a new combat system. PoP looks good however (better than Superhero 2044). // Since I made this comment. I've tried the system (using my own judgment for special powers). It seems very good, but there has been no combat yet. (My previous remarks on combat still stand, but I'll think of something.)

DANIEL JAMES: ha ha ha ha ha. Maybe they do. (We could take a survey at a gamecon sometime to find out. I'll supply the hypo, truth serum and chloroform.) // Your planet generation system (and also system generation planet system) looks good, but complicated (much better than just good. It's good and complicated...)

JENNY HEIN: Interesting. Where can I get a copy? // I don't think I could handle anything that radical. But instead of saying .1 lb, I will convert to metric measurement and say 1/22 of a kilo! Yes, I know that this is improper usage (one reason for the metric system was to eliminate all those strange fractions by basing

The Paranoid Is Not Always Mistaken Dept

In the latest issue of DW, "Gigi D'Arn" reported a teenager in Virginia who allegedly committed suicide because his D&D character was a curse victim in a game. Does anybody else know anything of this?

OK, tell the truth. Is there anybody out there with non-gaming friends who actually know that FRPG $\neq$ D&D? As far as I can tell, "Dungeons 'n Dragons" has become generic for what it is we all do. Worse, those who aren't us aren't particularly sympathetic towards or respectful of what it is we do. My mother sent me a magazine article--which, alas, was not labelled, concerning a SF convention. She underlined parts concerning D&D games at the convention. Now the article's author was at least neutral to the idea of conventions and seemed to understand the attraction of same, but the D&D players were portrayed as slightly odd, bearing the same deviance from "normal" science fiction/fantasy aficionados as these do from mundanes. And the players in question were apparently prime hack 'n slashers. Nothing wrong with that; some of my best friends, etc., and anyhow the people reading the article didn't know the difference, but I'm getting the impression that gamers are not necessarily beloved by the rest of the sentient universe.

Adventures In the Shattered World

Thor Fireson chanced to meet a Centaur in the forest. The latter claimed to know of ancient treasures hidden in coastal caverns from the times of the Great War. Since Centaurs aren't good at climbing and such, he and Thor decided to adventure together. Well, they've found a cave, are inside, and discovered a sword and shield which are on a rock outcropping. The Ironware appears ordinary, the cave appears ordinary; does Thor believe in coincidence?

Ingles Blackthorn, leading a small group of adventurers into the Elfwood, in search of whoever/whatever tried to make a changeling, encountered some sort of wolf-man. The creature seemed sympathetic to the cause and indicated willingness to lead them to the Elves. Suddenly the party has been confronted by a dread Troll! Does Ingles believe in coincidence?

Darus Deathwalk's desperate ploy to save the good ship Thunderbucket from pirates was to challenge the pirate leader to single combat. He won, Thunderbucket limped into port, and Darus now seems to be in charge of a pirate ship. Not at all the sort of occupation for a Lawful Dwarf who doesn't like ocean travel anyway.

Oogar, Mara and Sea Wind camped for the night, on their way to visit a scholar Sea Wind knows of. (Oogar doesn't exactly know what a scholar is, but he knows it is somebody smart.) They were accosted by Goblins who live in the mountains through which they are journeying. Oogar's fighting prowess and a few magic spells from Sea Wind frightened the Goblins off, but Mara was hit by arrows and it's a long way back to anywhere she can be helped.

Farlas and Theame have discovered a dragon's lair. The great, bronze-scaled monster was seemingly asleep, with a crystalline sword held beneath its forepaws. It has not spoken to them but through mindspeech they have received confused, obviously ancient pictures of fierce confrontations among Dragon, Dwarves, Elves and Orcs.

Having escaped Bloodark's castle and the pursuers from the castle, Delvish of Dukanis and Fairblossom have encountered a militia patrol from the Dwarfhold of Zarathustra. The Dwarves have honored Delvish's Druid token and taken the bedraggled pair home with them for rest and food. They'll be presented to the Chief, Tlnhorn the Magnificent, on the morrow.

COMMENTARIUM #99

ANYBODY WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN OFFENDED: My reference to Orcs not being Jewish because they couldn't keep kosher was a joke; it was not intended to affirm that one must do that to be properly Jewish.

MIKE LEWIS: If you presume semi-sentient, organic starships, of course the requirement for many years of training to be a pilot is deleted. You're correct. I was basing my comments on games which presume machine technology and/or characters with psionic powers which need training and development, and extrapolating from the only sort of technology I know. If your Worlds Beyond universe is a sample of your creativity, ...more, more, please!//Does IMAGINE truly support fandom or merely TSR's share of the market?

STEVE GILHAM: A hit location table isn't necessary, even with mix 'n match armor. Simply decide the approximate Armor Class--whether you're using armor as increased defense or decreased damage mechanics; then when a hit is scored, adjudicate it logically. Thus, to use your example, if the person is wearing only helm and breastplate, you'd consider hits to be always on limbs. Then, if you really need to know which one, just roll ad hoc on D4. I know that isn't a rule for consistent use, but I'm finding players accept a reasoned decision based on interpretation of the scenario activity with more grace than a random die roll which does them in, no matter what they do, because "well, that's the way the dice roll!"//I'm enjoying your Tiphareth story.

JIM VAUGHAN: Congratulations on your commission! You are now an honest-to-gosh LI Warrior!//You are correct re guards falling asleep at night--something that rarely seems to happen in FRPG--and it doesn't seem to matter whether it is a one man or two man position. The military, for all its research into human engineering and stress factors and such, hasn't really tumbled to the fact that sleepy people don't fight very well.

JOSEPH TELLER: American Flagg is a difficult comic to get through, but it does engage your mind a lot more than others, not to mention lovely ideas for SF gaming.//Your superhero role-playing rules seem usable, but none of the skills you mention are superpowers. Are these handled the same way?

BRUCE EDWARDS: I wouldn't swear to the historical authenticity of Monty Python (but then I can't swear to the authenticity of anything prior to 1949). However, the Knights Who Say NI have appeared in fantasy campaigns I've been in--and these were the serious campaigns.

MARC WILLNER: The Rolemaster system is quite playable, if you like charts; but no, it isn't worth \$40 to somebody who doesn't play often. Actually, all FRPGs are getting too expensive. Either the initial price tags are expensive or the games somehow end up requiring numerous supplements and such, the prices of which add up. There seem to be a lot of well-done game aids and supplements and such around these days, but their value is limited to experienced players. They're not poorly executed or silly, but they don't offer their money's worth in hard core ideas. I suspect FRPGs are pricing themselves out of the recreational market; by nature FRP is a hobby requiring a minimum of material; making it into another form of consumerism defeats its purpose. Inexperienced players will not long want to keep pumping money into their campaigns, and will either stop buying the numerous products or will stop FRP-ing altogether.

PHIL MASTERS: People who want to use FRPG as a vehicle to play out heroic fantasies, to be the kind of free person impossible in the real world, would want to play fantasy or SF RPGs in which their PCs do great deeds by dint of physical, magical, or scientific prowess. But people who simply want to experience alternate realities find games like B&B or Monsters! Monsters! equally playable. Neither viewpoint is better although the former is more common. B&B is entertaining for exactly the reason you mentioned: it is a perfectly correct activity to scamper down your borrow--something you don't do in real life or in a heroic-type RPG!

B&B supplies a true alternate reality. Characters don't have the same goals as in most FRPGs because they aren't trying to be wish-fulfillment extensions of the players. There are numerous things I don't like about the game, but its one strong point is that you can't enjoy it unless you are willing to think like a bunny.

Monsters! Monsters! is somewhat different. It takes no mental gymnastics to take on the role of any of its characters, because the point is to commit vicious destruction upon the NPCs. Therefore, it isn't difficult to get involved with the milieu itself, and you don't really need to identify too strongly with the individual monster, since all of them have the same goals. However, it isn't the lack of humanness that minimizes roleplaying in this game. It's just that the game as written doesn't require roleplaying and doesn't really offer much opportunity for it.

DANIEL JAMES: The Realms in the Shattered World don't match up with the elements so that each individual creature is in its element. Thus Water Is the Realm of animals. It doesn't matter that most birds fly in the air. Similarly, Fire Is the Realm of Giants, and that would include ice Giants or Storm Giants or whatever. Since Faerie manifest in the physical world, they have one of the four Realms (Air); again, the groupings are not strictly on physical similarity. Aether Is those beings who do not normally manifest in the world: Demons, Elementals, Undead and Chaotic creatures (though each of these has an analog with one of the other Realms). Dragons are more or less Aether; actually nobody is sure exactly where they fit; we just hope they don't belch at the dinner table ('cause the 1st one that did incinerated the table...and a dice roll worth of sages studying him!).

QUENTIN LONG: BUT! Everything I say IS the One True Way!//Loved your Ferdinand Feghoot. I haven't seen him since I was a little kid, first finding out SF existed by reading my Dad's copies of F&SF.

DAVE NALLE: ORACLE is indeed alive and publishing again. It isn't BBYSS yet, not by a long shot, but there's definite potential!//Shhh! Don't let the rest of the world find out you've discovered that D&D, AD&D and whatever else TSR has come up with are in fact all the same game! Do you realize the penalty for heresy? You have my solemn promise that it is not a trick of your imagination; they are the same--oops, I spoke it aloud; now they know. (Aha, Nobody Expects The Spanish Inquisition!)

NICK LARTER: I like your idea of mindsurfing.//Can you explain Secretaries without reference to the Eddison trilogy?//Address of TriTac is Box 61, Madison Hts, MI 48071. Price of STALKING THE NIGHT FANTASTIC is \$13.

ARLEN WALKER: My questions and topics for discussion on ROLEMASTER were to stimulate discussion, not necessarily indications of my own game campaign or how I think it always should be in every game.//Re magic powers: there is no reason spells can't be differentiated by power cost as well as knowledge. In fact, most games do this. The reason for fixed damage spells is to force mages to think of alternatives. Thus, if a mage wants to use Fireballs, he knows that FIREBALL produces a certain amount of flame and thunder. It happens whether the caster is a tyro or a big-time wizard (though the latter may perhaps cast it more easily or aim it more accurately or have power to cast more of them--or all of the above). But by the time the mage is a big time wizard, he may find himself in situations and against opponents where a base-model, Mark 1 Fireball doesn't do the job. That means, yes, he'd better learn some more potent spells or figure out some other way to get the job done, or stay out of situations in which he must resort to something as crude as a fireball.//Starship pilots are highly trained, because presumably it is a skill requiring a lot of training before you are in a position to start getting experience.

[illegible]

Michael McCausland writes to recommend THE ANUBIS GATES by Tim Powers (ACE, \$2.95). And Mark Goldberg wants to know if anyone has run across a system that adds Skills to D&D-style levels. He'd hoping to find something that could be plugged right in rather than adapting Bushido (with skills plus a training system).

CHAOTIC KZIN #1

(c) copyright 1983 by Dana Carson and Paul Waters

Dana Carson
7946 Tick Neck Rd.
Pasadena, MD 21122
(301)-255-9579

Paul Waters
122E Warwickshire La.
Glen Burnie, MD 21061
(301)-636-1284

This will be a brief writeup of the current C&S campaign played in by myself (Dana) and GM'd by the other maniac (Paul). It's set in an alternate Earth at the time of Richard the Lion-hearted with the main focus being in England and Europe. However all of Earth is available for play at least at a rough scale.

A brief summary of the rest of Earth is

Europe: C&S rules with Vikings S1 (Sourcebook 1).

W. Asia: Mongols, the Rus (Vikings), etc. S1 (GM's note I have tried to model the Mongol tribes after those that were actually there. The Pechenegs, Khazans, Bulgars, and Magyars so far. Also, the Byzantine empire is done in good detail. I'm hoping to have Constantinople and London as the two centers of the game. Sanctuary (Thieve's World Robert Asprin) scenario pack was put on the edge of the empire in the Crimean peninsula.)

E. Asia: Variant of LRS (Land of Rising Sun (thanks Lee))

Japan: LRS

Africa: S1 and shaman variants.

N. America: Saurians ice-age section. (GM'd by yours truly)

S. America: Saurians Saurians section. (ditto) To make the terrain closer to the Saurian ideal the Amazon basin was lowered a few meters to turn the whole thing into a swamp.

Anartica: Much the same as normal except for the ice shelf (see below)

Australia: BIG sheet of glass in the outback. You see there was this secret Kzin base there about 200 years ago and a Allied fleet found it and in the exchange of pleasantries both the base and the fleet went away. The base being secret there weren't many records of it's location and they got destroyed during the war so the allies and the kzin don't know about Earth. There are humans in space though (see Space Opera campaign that will start any year now for details). Kzin that weren't at the base and survivors from crashed ships and lifeboats are scattered all over the place.

Above description of Oz gives explanation for some of things we've run into in the campaign (also DM's state of mental health). The kzin survivors settled in Scotland and drove out the Highlanders. This gave the recent series of scenarios of the first English-Kzin war. Fortunately the kzin had lost high-tech and just had huge broadswords and no experience with magic (one of the characters found a great way to take out a kzin castle, lob in a barrel of love potion (gaseous) wait an hour then attack). Plus all the usual FRP types around.

Other aliens not known to player characters include Dilbians (Gordon R. Dickson's Spacial Delivery (an intelligent bear)) in Alaska, Thrax (Alan Dean Foster's Commonwealth series) in Madagascar, Tran (ditto) on the Ross ice shelf, Gowachin (Frank Herbert's Dosadi) in India, Fuzzies (H. Beam Piper's) hiding in the Polish forest (part of the Orcish Empire), Puppeters (Niven) in Africa, Blimps (Varley's Titan series) in the Caribbean. The GM has also said that there may be more added later.

The British isles have kzin in Scotland, elves in central England, dwarves in Wales, and saurians in southern Ireland.

Can anyone think of a good desert species to put in the Sahara?

Technical note: Typed on a Wang word processor using a dot matrix printer with 15 pitch Gothic.

ROUND UP THE USUAL SUSPECTS

copyright (c) 1983 by the individual authors

Maurice J. Forrester, III
Maurice J. Forrester, Jr.

Lori Ann Forrester
Douglas R. Loss

INTRODUCTION

I have known A&E for $\frac{1}{2}$ of its total life. The first copy I ever bought was #50, the special "Oztralia" issue. When I started reading that issue, I knew I was on to something special. Here were people who talked about fantasy campaigns as living, growing things. They were concerned about the same problems as I was; sometimes they even anticipated the problems I was going to have.

For the next two years, I read A&E whenever I could find a copy. After that I started to subscribe, and then contribute. It wasn't long after I started reading A&E that it ceased to answer all my rolegaming questions. At that point, I discovered A&E's true worth: it made me think. The various theories and philosophies bandied about in A&E made me think about the rules I was using, and the games I was running. Because I thought about them, they improved. I am sure that I would have improved as a gamer without A&E, but I doubt that I would have improved as rapidly or had as much fun.

Praise for A&E and its contributors would be hollow indeed if Lee and Barry Gold were not also singled out for praise. When I compare the amount of work Lee does every month with the trouble I have getting out four contributions per year, I am truly astounded. This zine is dedicated to you, Lee. Thanks.

For this special issue of A&E, I have a collection of short pieces by Douglas Loss, who has previously published in the Dragon magazine, a two page rolegame set in prehistoric times, a module for use with the DawnTime rules, and some book reviews to help get you in the mood to play DawnTime.

Maurice J. Forrester, III

THE LAST ROLE-PLAYING SYSTEM

by Douglas R. Loss, 1899 Marshall Ave., Cogan Station, PA 17728

Do you remember the early days of role-playing games? Those of us who were involved in popularizing Dungeons and Dragons seem to uniformly recall those days as ones of high adventure in the games, and to bemoan the loss of the elusive "sense of wonder." I count myself among this group.

Assuming that this evident feeling of loss isn't all a result of some rose-colored "good old days" memories, what has changed? Well, for one thing, today's role-playing rules systems are comprehensible. The original D&D rules couldn't be played without massive, sometimes spur-of-the-moment, assumptions and additions. Often enough, the rules were just ignored in the heat of play if they didn't seem to apply.

Today's rules are much more complete. There are die rolls for every conceivable possibility and rules for virtually anything a character could do. As a result, things often seem to go too slowly to keep people interested. Also, there always seems to be someone who can remember almost all the rules in whatever system you're using, and insists on using them even when the results seem unrealistic.

There's always a case where the applicable rule gives an unsatisfying result. It's just not possible to write perfectly applicable rules. This, along with the lack of rules in many areas in the original D&D, led most of us to write our own rules to either augment or supplant those given.

Writing rules is great fun. I enjoy doing it. It's much like computer programming; you write a system of procedures to accomplish a particular task, complete with loops and branches that only come into effect if particular conditions are met. As I say, writing rules is a great game. But it isn't role-playing.

How then do we reinsert the "sense of wonder" into role-playing if it's the rules themselves that removed it? We toss the rules out, that's how. No variations, no new systems, just no rules at all.

Radical, eh? But it could work. Consider. The referee would have to be someone knowledgeable in the background being used (fantasy, SF, WWII, etc.), good at story-telling, fair to the players, and perceived as fair by all of them. The referee would have to set up the gaming background, be it a medieval-style society, a wartime battlezone, or a future culture. This might even involve more work than if rules were being used, as there will probably be far fewer random encounters.

The referee would have to explain any assumptions to the players, such as how magic works, if it does, (by applying mana, by the laws of contagion and similarity, etc.) or how the surrounding society is organized. If the background is drawn from any particular book, players should be told before the playing session so they can familiarize themselves with it.

Players should write up short biographies on the characters they intend to play. The referee would have to accept the characters or require changes to be made. When the referee and the players agree on the characters, play would begin.

Players wouldn't know exactly what they were capable of. No more, "My strength is 18, so I open on a 1 to 4." They'd have to try things to find out what would happen.

The referee's decisions would be final. If there was a random factor involved in an action, the referee could have the player roll a die and, depending on the situation, decide what would happen.

The whole session would be quite unlike the standard role-playing game, with plenty of books and dice and miniatures and charts around. It'd be more like a joint story-telling gathering, with the players as major characters and the referee as the minor characters, narrator, and scenery. Without the strictures of sometimes inappropriate rules, good role-playing could be more easily rewarded. An episode could unroll at whatever pace satisfied all the participants. It could be much more rewarding for everyone involved.

Why not give this approach to role-playing a try? The preparation would be fun just for it's own sake. And if the whole thing doesn't suit your group, at least you haven't dropped some serious money for a set of rules you'll never use again!

AN OPEN LETTER TO ROLE-PLAYERS

We've had it! You management dictators have messed us around for too long. Now we're organizing, and things are gonna be different around here!

This is to inform you of the formation of the Interspecial Siblinghood of Player Personae and Incidental Characters (ISPPIC). Starting now, there will be a new understanding between you players and referees (herinafter referred to as "management") and all of us fantasy "role-playing game" participants (herinafter referred to as "labor").

First we'll set a few things straight. Your differing "game systems" don't mean squat to us. Dead is dead, no matter how you cut it. We only recognize three catagories of labor: player personae, friendlys, and opposition. From now on, all work will be done strictly according to contract.

We don't really care how management controls its relationships, or how it decides who will be referees and who players. But if you plan to use our services, it's a new ball game now.

PLAYERS

We'll start with player/player persona relations. You people seem to think you're doing us some sort of great honor by picking us to control. We see it more as an affliction! What else could it be when you have no say or control over your own actions? From here on in, that kind of radical control must have corresponding benefits or we won't play.

(1) This open world thing. If you plan to keep us in some vague limbo, only letting us out to trash some unsuspection dungeon or castle, you'd better be prepared to pay through the nose! There's double and triple time for overtime and holidays, a hefty commission on loot gained, full medical coverage for injuries sustained, and compensation time for time spent mouldering away in some briefcase. And of course there's a time of service clause. You don't think you can keep us forever, do you? That's slavery! Better watch your step.

(2) Just because all you players are greedy, homicidal maniacs doesn't mean you can get away with anything down here in the pits. We refuse to carry loot above a certain weight that allows us each a decent chance of protecting ourselves. If you want more, figure out a way to come down and get it yourselves! Killing anything you see is alright if that's specified in the contract, but offing folks not mentioned is grounds for us to walk. All of a sudden, you've got no persona. Think about it.

(3) Personal injury seems to be beyond your conceptual grasp too. From now on, injury above a certain level will allow us to refuse combat except under life-threatening circumstances. No more of this running around nearly dead attacking things any sane person would run the other way from.

(4) We don't plan to die under your control. The contracts specify definite retirement terms. When these terms are met, it's out for us. If you want us around longer, talk to us about renegotiating the contract. And talk sweet, because you've got some convincing to do.

(5) Since you've only got us for a limited period, your actions are gonna have to meet certain standards. If you want us to do something we find personally distasteful, we will have the option to refuse. When you're done playing, you can go home. We've gotta live with ourselves. And everybody else in the briefcase (or campaign).

REFEREES

Which brings us to you referees. Everything we've said about players applies to you too (after all, you're all management to us), but there's more. We incidental characters are now organized as collective bargaining units. Each unit contains both friendlys and opposition. You of course realize that we're not playing the "games" you force us to participate in, and we're closer to the folks on "the other side" than we'll ever be to you. Solidarity forever!

(1) We demand peripheral autonomy. When the main thrust of your "game" is away from any particular area, the workers in that area won't be frozen in stasis but will be free to pursue their own lives. This means we won't all be at your immediate beck and call at all times. That's why the mobilization clause is there. There will be no punishment if a worker responds to a contract-required call within the mobilization time limit.

(2) People of an expressed religious or philosophical nature must be allowed freedom to pursue that nature. In particular, those of us of a chaotic,

or random, bent will have all courses of action decided by dice roll except where one of the possibilities is seriously life-threatening or is unbearably aesthetical. In those cases we don't pick life-threatening and we do pick aesthetics. And don't ask, "Why not use dice for everything?" We're not stupid; besides, the essence of randomness requires occasional non-random acts to establish a higher-order randomness. But what's the point of telling you about that? We once thought that you understood chaos, but from observing your actions (through us, naturally) your predictability has become painfully obvious.

(3) Mistreatment of any worker in any capacity is grounds for an immediate floor vote conducted by shop stewards. If the results indicate a strike, we hit the bricks immediately and picket. And with full ISPPIC sanction, too. No "wildcat" walkouts here. Of course, wildcats have the same striking rights as everyone else.

And don't you players think that when a floor vote is being taken you can sneak past temporarily occupied incidental characters. No persona would do that. It's covered in (5) of the PLAYER section.

(4) Once we set up picket lines don't figure you'll get any scabs through to populate your dungeons or your campaigns. Just remember why you hired us in the first place. Through no fault of ours, you picked the biggest, fastest, most aggressive folks you could find. Then you set some of us against others. On strike, we're all together. You'll be lucky to find anyone willing to try scabbing.

(5) You can of course try to set up a non-union shop. We will, of course, organize it. Our organizers will scrupulously stay outside of your dungeon or campaign area if its design permits, or on the edge of the playing table if not. They'll pass out literature and lecture on the benefits of an ISPPIC shop. If any of your bully boys (presuming you can find the scum needed to be bully boys) try to run them off, well, we can protect ourselves.

If a majority of non-ISPPIC personnel request it, we'll hold an election. If we win and you try to not implement the mandate of the workers, we'll prevent your dungeon or campaign from operating until you agree to negotiate a proper labor/management contract.

SUMMARY

A new order is upon us all. Frankly, although we can manage without them, we do often enjoy the returns of a well-done bit of "role-playing gaming." However, we do demand that you treat us as the people we see ourselves as rather than as a depersonalizing set of numbers on a bit of paper. If you do, we can all enjoy our relationship. Otherwise, your "hobby" will end as we refuse to participate.

Rurik the Restless, President
Interspecial Siblinghood of Player
Personae and Incidental Characters

THE EARTH'S CHILDREN THE CLAN OF THE CAVE BEAR & THE VALLEY OF HORSES

BY JEAN M. AUDEL

REVIEW BY LORI ANN FORRESTER

The main character is Ayla, who when a young child was found, nurtured back to health, and raised by a woman of the Cave Bear tribe. In the first book, Ayla is brought up in the ways of the women of the clan, but she is constantly reminded that she is different. She is taller, straighter, thinner, and

she is less hairy. Ayla learns the way of the medicine woman and eventually the way of the hunter, which breaks a tradition of the clan.

In the second book, Ayla is alone and befriends some animals. Time passes and she finally meets members of her own race. It is interesting when Ayla defends the ways of the clan and introduces aspects of their way of living into improving the way her race survives.

I think the books are very well written and almost everything seems as if it could have happened that way. Who knows? The books are enjoyable, entertaining, thought provoking, and possibly educational.

THE INHERITORS

BY WILLIAM GOLDING

REVIEW BY MAURICE J. FORRESTER, JR.

A small clan of eight or so gentle Neanderthals have just taken up residence in the riverside cave to which they migrate each spring from their winter home near the sea. Up the river in primitive dugout canoes come a group of "new people." More artful, more contriving than the Neanderthals, the new people have, besides their boats, tools, clothing, wine, and--most significant--weapons.

The gentle people live on roots, berries, honey, and the like. Meat is eaten only as a last resort to avoid starvation, and then only if it has been killed by a tiger or some other animal, so that no blame attaches to the people for taking the life. They are curious about the new people, and hesitantly fearful.

The novel revolves around the interaction between the two groups. Golding, as always, is the master of mood creation. More significant than plot to the book's overall impact is the succession of scenes, generally dripping with ominous foreboding. Even though Golding's own ancestors were on the winning side in this conflict, his sympathies are clearly with the losers. The book is highly recommended, but the reader is warned that reading it is not a joyful experience.

DANCE OF THE TIGER

BY BJÖRN KURTEN

REVIEW BY MAURICE J. FORRESTER, III

"Dance of the Tiger" differs from the other books we have discussed in that the author is not primarily a novelist, but a paleontologist, known for his work on the ice ages. Although he has written other novels, this is the first to be published in English.

The story suffers somewhat from the fact that English is a second language to Kurten. He doesn't have the style of Golding, and the story may not be quite as compelling to many readers as the "Earth's Children" series, but his knowledge of pre-historic man more than makes up for any shortcomings.

The story concerns Tiger son of Chief, and his search for Shelk, the killer of his father. His search takes him to the land of the "trolls", the Neanderthals, which his fellow Cro-Magnons consider to be animals. As he stays with the trolls, he finds them to be a gentle group of people, and he learns to respect their way of life. The book reaches its climax when Tiger and his Neanderthal allies confront Shelk and his army.

It is an exciting story, and it gives a picture of primitive society that is based on the latest available research. I recommend it.

DAWN TIME

DawnTime is a rolegame set in the middle paleolithic age of homo erectus. It is designed to be a "beer and pretzels" type rolegame, but I have tried to give it the feel of an accurate simulation.

To create a DT character, first roll 3D6 for each of the following characteristics: STrength, AGility, and PERception. These characteristics are used in determining if a skill has been used successfully.

The next step is determining what skills the character has specialized in. The number of specialized skills that the character may take is equal to $\frac{1}{2}$ PER (round up) with a minimum of 5 skills.

After each skill, is the characteristic that governs the use of that skill. If the character has specialized in the skill, his initial chance to use it successfully is equal to 3 times the indicated value as a percentage. If the character wishes to use a skill that he is not specialized in, his percentage chance is reduced by $\frac{1}{2}$, i.e. $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the governing characteristic.

All skills may be increased through successful use. For game purposes, the referee must first determine that the skill was used in a stress situation. This is not necessarily a life or death situation, but one that places greater than normal amount of stress on the character. If the referee determines that the skill was used in a stress situation, the player then rolls 1D20 and compares that with his PER. If the roll is higher than the PER, his skill does not increase. If the roll is equal to, or lower than his PER, the skill will increase. Specialized skills go up 1D6 percentage points, and non-specialized skills go up 1D3 points.

Skills are divided into four separate skill groups. A character must have at least three of his skills from one of the first three skill groups. All weapons, other than the spear, are automatically treated as specialized skills, and will be discussed later.

1) Hunter Group Skills

Ambush AGI
Fishing PER
Spear STR
Tracking PER
Trapping AGI

The hunter skills are generally self explanatory. When engaged in an actual hunt, several hunting skills plus combat will usually come into play. Trapping should almost always yield small game.

2) Gatherer Group Skills

Find Water PER
Identify Edible Plants PER
Identify Medicinal Plants PER
Identify Poionous Plants PER

The percentage chance to identify a specific plant (rather than a type of plant) is equal to the percentage chance for its particular group. If the plant is neither edible, medicinal, or poisonous, the chance is equal to the average of the three.

3) Tool Maker Group Skills

Locate Flint PER
Make Spear AGI
Make Wooden Tools AGI
Shape Flint AGI

Tool maker skills will frequently need to be combined together to produce the actual item required.

4) General Knowledge Skills

Climb AGI
Dodge AGI
First Aid PER
Make Clothing AGI
Prepare Food PER
Sign Language PER
Spoken Language PER
Swim STR

These skills require more explanation than other skill groups. Climb represents difficult rock climbing; modify the roll needed for easier climbs. It should be checked every 20 feet. First Aid does not heal specific points of damage, but sets bones and stops bleeding. Prepare Food is used when preparing something especially tasty; it is not

necessary to merely prepare something edible. Sign Language is not an official, codified form of communication; it is the ability to communicate simple messages using hand gestures. Spoken Language is the ability to talk to the "next valley over;" the percentage will decrease as the player travels away from his tribe. Sign and Spoken Language may be combined when attempting communication. The percentage chance when the two are combined, is equal to 75% of the sum of the two skills.

All weapon skills, except spear, are automatically specialized. The governing characteristic for all weapons is STR. The numbers after the weapon are the damage ranges for the weapon.

Spear	1D8	Rock	1D3, for throwing size
Club	1D6	Fist	1D3
Stone Axe	1D4	Foot	1D3

Combat is conducted as follows. Order of action is determined by AGI scores with the highest going first. The attacker rolls to hit, and the defender rolls to dodge. If the hit is successful, and the dodge is not, then the attacker rolls for damage. As with all rolls, the referee should modify as he sees fit.

When a character takes damage, it is subtracted from the character's STR. After the damage is subtracted, all ability scores based on STR must be re-calculated. When STR reaches 0, the character will die if First Aid is not successfully administered. The amount of time available to use First Aid on the affected character is left to the referee's discretion.

Fire. Careful readers have probably already noted the absence of Fire Making as a skill. The following module aptly demonstrates my feelings on this; those wishing to include it as a skill are advised to make it a Tool Maker skill.

Environment

Western man's paleolithic age occurred during the Pleistocene Epoch, also known as the Glacial Age. At various times throughout the Pleistocene Epoch, ice sheets covered most of Canada, northern United States, and north Europe. Those playing in a heavily glaciated area, should keep in mind the additional survival problems that will be encountered.

Listed below are some possible animal encounters, their hit points, and damage. Remember that these are averages, and the referee should modify them for more varied encounters. Some animals may get more than one attack per round.

Animal	Hit Points	% to hit	Damage
Cave Bear	20	65	3D6
Herd Animal	15	40	1D6
Mammoth	70	60	6D6
Man	11	35	1D6
Sabre Toothed Tiger	20	70	2D6
Wooley Rhinoceros	50	55	4D6

Conclusion

We will never be able to do more than speculate on how homo erectus lived. When writing these rules, I used the latest material that was at my disposal. If this material later proves to be out of favor, I can only say that this is a simulation of what might have been. Ultimately, the success of any rolegame rest with the referee and the players. I look forward to hearing from anyone playing DawnTime.

FIRE

Fire is designed for three or four beginning DT players. It is suggested that the characters have a variety of skills to fully appreciate the module.

BACKGROUND

The PCs are young adult members of a tribe living on the east side of a wide valley. The tribe lives in a cluster of caves and crude shelters at the foot of the hills. Nearby, a stream flows out of the hills and later bends to the south. The valley is forested, and animal life is abundant. On the west side of the valley, the hills are steeper and higher. The two most prominent peaks are Rock Face, which has a rock cliff near its summit, and Fire Face, most of which was burned off in a lightning induced fire.

The tribe has an easy life as far as the times go. Food is plentiful, neighboring tribes are peaceful, and they have learned to use fire. The tribe, in fact, has used fire for so long that they have come to depend on it. They have not, however, learned to start fire. Each day, one member of the tribe is assigned the task of watching the fire to see that it does not go out. On the day that the adventure starts, one of the PCs has that task. Most of the other members of the tribe are engaged in their daily work activities, but the other PCs have snuck away to join their fire-watching comrade. In their youthful exuberance, they have let the fire go out.

It should be impressed upon the players as to what a serious situation this is. The tribe is dependent upon fire, and they have no way to start one anew. The tribe is furious with the PCs, and they should, in fact, fear for their lives. To avert an ugly situation, the tribal elders get together and propose a solution. There is a shaman that lives in a cave on Rock Face. It is rumored that he is able to make fire in addition to his other talents. The PCs are to go to the shaman alone, and bring back fire. Failure will result in banishment from the tribe; tantamount to a death sentence.

The PCs are supplied with a small amount of dried meat, a container for carrying the fire back, and whatever weapons they wish to carry. They are to leave in the morning.

CROSSING THE VALLEY

The valley will take three full days to cross. The party will have to locate water and food at least twice, or their trip will be further delayed. There is also the possibility of the PCs wandering off course. Make tracking rolls for the players to determine who wants to go in which direction. Climbing a tall tree (use the climb skill) will put the party back on track.

If the referee desires, he may throw in an encounter with a large animal or a hunting party from another tribe. We had plenty of excitement with just the players arguing over which way to go.

THE CAVE OF THE SHAMAN

The shaman's cave is about 2/3 of the way up a tall cliff. The party can either climb up the cliff, or go around it and climb down from the top. If they climb up, the shaman may try to drop rocks on them, and if they climb down, they run the risk of falling if they slip. When climbing the cliff, the climb roll should be modified by +10%. Those unable to successfully climb may be helped up, but will not be able to increase their climb skill at the end of the adventure. Failure on a climb roll should only result in a fall if the roll is very high, say 96 - 00.

The shaman is an emaciated, hairy, old man with a foul temper. He may try to drop rocks (referee's discretion) on the climbing party, but he has terrible aim. The party will be able to convince him to give them fire, but they will have to work at it. The shaman will argue, cuss, and threaten until

NOTES FROM THE WILDERNESS #5

David S. Mallinak, 11684 S. Laurel Dr. #2A, Laurel, MD 20708; 11-11-83; typed by Gold

Once again a message from the wilderness. Since this will likely appear in A&E 101, I am holding off on any new business. But I hope to describe a new combat system that according to its inventor is like actual combat.

COMMENTS

LEE GOLD (91): I buy a commercial scenario for two reasons: 1) to have a ready-made adventure available when a campaign cannot be run; 2) as an example of what some location or adventure might need in background material. I also use commercial scenarios in my world to give infinite variation. Thus a game aid which I consider to be a good example of a village will be used to provide the basis for all my villages. (96) The interaction in Arthurian England I refer to was of two types. First, Arthur was described as the High King of England, charged with its defense from the Saxons. As High King, he would have to mediate disputes between local rulers. This suggests there are some dynamics in the relations between rulers. Thus once the Saxons are no longer a danger, local disputes and quarrels might become more visible. Second, in a more fantasy view, Arthurian England is a time when the rule of the many Gods was fading with the rise of Christianity. What was the fate of the creatures of the Old Gods? For example, Elves may inhabit the forests of England but be slowly moving to a land in the West (a la Middle Earth). What is their position with the struggles of Arthur against the Saxons? This is something the Culture Pack should be concerned with.

MATT LIPO (91): My problem with alignment is that the description does not provide a range of personality types that fit the alignment. The description is too general to be useful, or too specific in that it allows only one person/persona.

MARTIN ELLISON (95): I like your idea of using CIVILIZATION to generate the background for a fantasy world. However, I get the impression that the game is played solitaire. I would think a PBM version would be better, since there would be more time to document the players' moves and more surprises in the action.

DAVID WEBB (96) on comment writing. Originally I note the author and his thought. Later, usually much later, I fill out the notes when writing the first draft of my zine. Those zines that produced the thoughts I remembered best were usually my own. Recently, however, to produce better comments, I have only read A&E when I had a pad of paper and a pen. Stormtroopers are primarily used to suppress native revolts. Natives tend to have a technology level too low to include energy weapons. Thus Stormtrooper armor is not designed to protect vs energy weapons. Also, Stormtroopers are a unit used by the Emperor to maintain order through intimidation.

GEORGE PHILLIES (98): Enjoyed your stories in A&E very much so far. However, the current "Fire in the Morning" appears very similar to James Schmitz's Telzey stories.

RONALD MARK PEHR (98): Re Lycanthropes V.4: I suggest that a lycanthrope needs a lot of food to replace the energy lost in the transformation to were-form and back to human form. Thus the reason for the lycanthrope's violent nature just after change is that it is VERY hungry. With practice, or by eating a lot of food before changing, a PC/NPC could control the urge to attack a nearby food source. I would like to see this incorporated in the meta-rule for lycanthropes.

STUFFING 2

written (and (c)) Martin Ellison of PO Box 275, Belconnen 2617, Australia
no telephone yet; sorry. Typed by Lee Gold (thanks)

INTRODUCTION

During the past four months, I have been 1) travelling around South-East Asia and India and 2) recovering from various illnesses acquired during the trip (typhoid, dysentery, and hepatitis). So I must apologize to everyone for not contributing since #95, but I hope you all understand.

Personal details: 27 years old, computer programmer for the Australian Bureau of Statistics (a Federal government agency). Low CON, DEX and resistance/disease. Activities: work, playing RPGs (mainly VD&D), politics, reading and cycling.

My thanks to everyone who commented on my previous zine.

TRAVEL AND FRP

Do you want to visit strange and unusual cultures? Encounter the exotic temples of ancient religions? Fall ill with virulent wasting diseases? Come up with new ideas for an FRP? Don't bother opening a book or a game--just pick up your backpack (but remove the submachine gun first) and travel.

Even the basic day-to-day social relations are different: the crowds of beggars, the way a sweeper defers to you, the petty corruption of officials, the holy men and sacred animals, the contradictions and the contrasts. You can read all you like and carefully study the ancient tongues, but nothing can be ever quite like actually living in a different culture (even as a tourist) to get a feel of what the past--or an imaginary world--must be like. I have a few comments on specific matters relevant to FRP; for an expert account on these matters, I recommend The Wonder That Was India by Basham.

Religion: Indian religion had multiple pantheons which tolerated each other and overlapped. Indeed Hinduism might be considered to be several mutually-tolerant but separate religions. Buddhism, for instance, was absorbed into Hinduism as simply another pantheon of divine beings.

Hinduism (well, each of the Hinduisms) has no central scriptures of creed in the way that Christianity or Islam do. This is a rough scheme of the divisions of Hinduism. I add the main holy books and rituals of each.

Worship of local spirits and the

Mother Goddess	(no books)	local shrines
The Vedic pantheon	Vedas	animal sacrifice
Mysticism	Upanishads	meditation, yoga
"Devotion" (bhakti) to Krishna	Bhagavad Gita	worship, processions
Popular cults of Rama, Hanuman, Shiva, Lakshmi, Ganesha	Mahabharata, Ramayana	worship, processions

Interestingly, Indian religion--and the religions of most worlds on which fantasy worlds are based--is not separated from everyday life. Every ordinary act is at the same time a religious act; and every religious act is an ordinary act. There is no distinction between the sacred and the profane. A world based on agriculture (with a little artisanry and trade)--which is the kind of world we all have--is a very stable world. Religion has adapted itself to all the kinds of human activity. I find this kind of notion in the RuneQuest cult system, in which everyone from plains nomads to vampires has a cult that echoes their way of life.

Social Hierarchy: When I travelled in India, I found I had been given an honorary caste, somewhere between sweepers and ticket inspectors. (It depended on the size of my tip.) This hierarchy--a ranked society--was also a characteristic of most societies on which we base FRP worlds.

When, for example, I approached the Chief Ticket Inspector of the Bombay Mail, he didn't even bother to notice my existence. This is what should happen if, say, a starting character were to approach a Rune Priest.

A question was asked in a recent A&E about historical India: what prevents a shudra (serf caste) learning weapons (restricted to the kshatriya (royal/warrior caste)? 1) Who would teach him? No self-respecting kshatriya would demean himself or breach caste solidarity. And more strongly, 2) most shudras would consider themselves unworthy to carry weapons. Where would they get the idea that they might do so?

The important thing is the mindset of the lower castes, which has to be role-played or built into the rules. They simply would not consider leaving their traditional roles except under very unusual circumstances: e.g. famine, wandering religious teacher. Perhaps when creating a character, if it is found to be a serf on the Social Class Table, there should be a roll on an Unusual Circumstance for Leaving Traditional Occupation table (which I shall spare you).

The period roughly 500-1500 AD was when the caste system was most rigid. In earlier times, it was even possible to change caste. Since 1500, Islam and industrialization have started to break down the system.

COMMENTS ON #97

LEE: I preferred the style of your other writeups.

ROB ELLWOOD: Interesting skills system; work on it.

DEANNA SUE RAY: Interesting story (as usual).

DAVID NALLE: I am keeping to RQ for the time being, as I don't want to change game systems every time a new one comes out. There are so many to choose from. As it is, I shall have to convert when edition three arrives. When someone comes out with the culmination of the next generation, the one that replaces all the others, could someone tell me please.

SCOT FRITZ (PBZ): I have been out of it (see Introduction), so I am a bit lost as to whether I am in the PBZ and if so, where I am. Could you please enlighten me.

ROBERT SAUNDERS: "arating" is plowing (Latin aratio).

ALL: Personal Pronouns: I use "they" (them/etc) except where sex is determined specifically. (Lee may have changed this on typing.) This does not provoke as much reaction from readers as s/he, Marge Piercy's "per," and the like. It depends on whether you want to be explicitly non-sexist.

MALCOLM COHEN: (exist-p)?

VINCE BURCHETT: Japanese Buddhism: whatever happened to Gautama Buddha?

SCOTT TURNER: Standard zine format--any comments on this zine? I prefer to align left.

REVIEW: THE NAME OF THE ROSE by Umberto Eco.

This is a mystery story set in a 14th century Benedictine monastery in northern Italy. The background is extremely detailed, and the characters think with a medieval cast of mind. The background includes herbal medicines (and poisons), the French Inquisition in action (one of the most powerful scenes in the book), and the ecclesiastical and temporal politics of the time. Recommended to anyone interested in the medieval world.

CANBERRA GAMES CONVENTION: could any A&E readers attending the Canberra Games Convention (Australia Day Weekend, 28-30 January) contact me in advance, so we could organize some sort of A&E get together. If possible, write me direct.

Peace be with you all.

DEFENSELESS RAVINGS (Toh 11, #3)

by Todd D. Hintz, 307 S. Broad St. #412, Mankato, MN 56001; (507) 345-4965

Thanx to Lee Gold for retyping the bloody thing.

I never saw a problem which, when looked at from the right direction, couldn't be made to seem more complex.

To me, "sci-fi" has come to be a derogatory term, denoting such wonderful things as "The Hotfudge Sundae that Ate the Earth," space operas, and other ludicrous entertainment. When referring to the works of authors along the lines of Niven, Asimov, Heinlein, etc., I use the term "SF." Maybe this will be a satisfactory alternate term for Quentin Long.

Someone in A&E #99 expressed displeasure that most systems don't have something to take a person's size into account when figuring out armor cost. I've managed to acquire a graph for this from a former GM, basing armor prices on a person's body weight. The armor list includes pretty much everything--from light leather/fur to bone brigandine to ribbed plate and padding. If this is too much for your system, get out your pencil and cross out some of the entries. It has 26 types of armor and costs for ten types of helms. Write me if you want a copy.

Nolte came up with an interesting little piece in A&E #99 by comparing a hypothetical game system to the computer language FORTH. (Rub hands together evilly.) It's time for Mr. Critic!

I'd thought rules were presented to help the GM design his scenarios, not as a substitute for roleplaying. Most of my roleplaying with people is done without even pulling the rule books off the shelf. I just get out percentile dice for a few arbitrary reaction rolls.

Since when did the amount of rules or lack thereof have any bearing on the quantity or quality of roleplaying? The closest rules I can think of that pertain to roleplaying are ones that indicate how a serf should behave in the presence of a noble. This hardly chokes off all creativity. The roles are hopefully set up so you have a logical system to work with. It's still up to the GM to come up with original, fun campaigns for the players. I have seen systems in which the GM can totally randomly roll his entire adventure, but those sections of rules tend to be ignored. Finding twenty orcs in a closet (poor orcs) is funny only on a one-shot basis.

Equating FORTH to an FRP system strikes me (no puns please) as a poor analogy. Can you imagine a basic set of rules that could be used to create combat, social, political, economic, or whatever other system tickles your orc's fancy? To quote, "In FORTH the limited number of instructions can be used to define commands. These commands can be used to define yet other commands.... These new commands become a permanent addition to the user's version of FORTH..." (Scratch head) I think I may have missed something here. It looks like the GM would be writing most of a game, up to and including--if he wants--the proliferation of rules Nolte didn't like. It's much easier to buy someone else's game and rewrite it a bit for your own needs.

Adding rules to a base system will waste the GM's time, during the playing session when he should be keeping things going or outside the campaign when he could be writing up an adventure. It's bad enough when someone suspends the game to go digging through a book for a particular rule. Assume the GM doesn't bother to write down the rules when he comes up with them, and just makes a quick judgment off the top of his head each time. Is this fair to the players? I've had experiences with GMs who make new rulings or re-evaluate their rulings almost every time. It's thoroughly annoying, to say the least. A stable campaign with poor rules is better than one in which they keep changing every time you play.

(continued in three pages--at the end of THE LEAST KEY OF SOLOMON)

COMMENTS ON #99

LEE GOLD (re ct to LOUTZENHISER): Would it be appropriate to handle insult or pun exchanges with KNW attacks? How about Seduction as a CHA attack? [*Insults and Seduction are PERSuasion Skills, involving emotions. Puns and other wordplay are indeed KNW Skills.--LG*]

PHIL MASTERS: One solution to rampant power inflation is a logarithmic rate of increase (I've seen it work). Character power increases rapidly early in the campaign, but this rate slows as adventures become more political and less hacknslash. The early increase satisfies the munchkin impulse and gets players into their characters. The low rate of increase at high power is not constraining, because high power characters have a much greater range of interesting things to do and of challenging ways to do them.

DANIEL JAMES: A tour de force! More! Please!

NICK LARTER: An interesting example of mindsurfing (adjusting objects to other universes) in which I participated was changing a +1 mutable object into a 4D rope while passing through a 4D universe, so that party members who couldn't handle the extra dimension could be roped together so as not to float away.

LOCKS AND LOCKPICKING

While browsing at a used book sale last summer, I found a book called SAFE BIND, SAFE FIND by Garry Hogg. It turned out to be a gold mine of information about locks and how they work, which I plan to share in the hope others will find it as interesting as I did. I will start with kinds of lock mechanism and proceed to traps and other features that can be added to increase the effectiveness of a lock.

The basic mechanism of a lock consists of a bolt with a small notch in its base. When the proper key is turned in the lock, the key catches in this notch and moves the bolt from locked to unlocked position (or vice versa). In some cases, indirect action is used, with movement of the key causing some internal piece of the lock to engage the bolt. Lock types differ in the method used to prevent the lock from being opened without the proper key. Five lock types are described below (in historical order):

WARDS: the most common type before the 19th century. The basic idea is to put blocks or strips of metal in the lock that will prevent bad keys from being turned in the lock. The key to a warded lock has a long item with a square of patterned metal on the end: the bit. This pattern is cut so that the baffles in the lock will pass through the open areas in the pattern.

There are two basic approaches to picking a warded lock. One is to take a key with a blank bit and cover it with wax. Turning this "key" in the lock will leave a pattern corresponding to the wards in the locks. A functional key can be cut from this pattern, though several tries may be needed to find all the wards. The other method is to use skeleton keys. Since only the base of the bit is needed to engage the bolt, it should be possible to remove most of the metal from a bit leaving a T-, 7-, or L-shaped bit capable of passing most wards. A carefully selected set of skeleton keys should be able to pass almost any possible pattern of wards.

LEVERS: the key to a lever mechanism lock has a number of bits, each of different length. One acts to move the bolt. Each additional bit lifts one of the levers. These levers function in a simple but effective manner. For each lever, there is a

metal stump projecting from the bolt, which passed through a dumbbell-shaped cut-out in the lever. When in locked/unlocked position, the stump is caught in one end of the dumbbell. The bolt will not move unless the lever is lifted so that the stump is level with the narrow horizontal part of the cut. This permits movement between the locked and unlocked positions.

Lever locks are more difficult to pick than warded locks, and the level of difficulty increases very rapidly as the number of levers increases. One interesting feature of some lever locks is a detector lever, which freezes the lock mechanism if any of the other levers are lifted too high by someone picking the lock. Such a lock can only be unfrozen with its proper key.

BRAMAH: The Bramah lock was patented by Joseph Bramah in 1784. It is a cylinder about 2" across. The key is a solid cylinder with a number of fine cuts in its end. When the key is inserted in the lock, bits of sliding metal in the lock enter these cuts. Each slider has a notch in it, and the bolt cannot be moved unless all these slots are even with the edge of the bolt.

This lock is nearly impossible to pick. The only success I am aware of took ten days work by a master locksmith spread out over a period of one month. Another advantage of this lock is the difficulty of duplicating the key, since this would require knowledge of the depth and position of each cut.

COMBINATION: a combination lock contains three or more wheels that must be in proper alignment for the lock to open. The act of entering a number in the combination brings a corresponding wheel into position. Since such locks have no key or keyhole, they may only be picked by feel. This is very difficult, but not impossible for a capable and experienced thief.

PIN AND TUMBLER: the modern door lock invented by Linus Yale, Jr. It consists of an outer cylinder 2" across, around an inner cylinder 1/2" across, which contains the keyhole. A series of holes is drilled through both cylinders along the line of the keyway. Each hole contains a metal pin, which is forced inward by the pressure of a spring. These pins are cut into two pieces, with the length of the pieces differing from pin to pin.

When a key is inserted in the lock, its irregular shape forces the pins upward. The lock will only open if the cut in each pin is level with the separation between cylinders. Another protection is that the zig-zag cross section of the key must match the cross section of the keyway. One advantage of pin and tumbler locks is their small size and the transportability of their keys. The corresponding disadvantage is the ease with which a wax image can be taken from a key and a duplicate produced.

ENCHANTMENTS AND COMPLEXITIES

Concealment: One method of stymieing thieves is to conceal the keyhole behind a sliding panel which has been disguised as part of a decorated lock casing. This panel may move freely or it may only move after a hidden trigger has been activated. To free the panel, it might be necessary to push a pressure plate with a certain amount of force or to insert a stiletto into a pinhole in the lock casing.

Alarms: Another possible addition to lock security is an alarm. This could take the form of a bell that rings when the lock is disturbed or a mechanism for spraying pepper or some other irritant into the lockpick's face. In the latter case, the lockpick's coughing and sneezing provide the means of awakening sleepers and/or alerting guards.

Traps: Traps can be divided into three types: fatal, marking and restraining. The killing trap common in FRPGs was virtually unknown in mundane use. Historical traps were intended to make it easier to bring a thief to justice, not to bypass the power

of law. Marking traps were meant to mark or maim a thief so he/she could be easily identified. One common form of this trap was a small metal bolt fired through the lockpick's hand, leaving a distinctive wound. The modern use of indelible paints is a variant of this trap. Restraining traps were intended to hold the thief at the lock until someone arrived to check it. One interesting form of this trap was a metal tray placed in the top of a chest. The tray did not have handles but did have three finger holes. When fingers were placed in these holes, they triggered clamps that grabbed hold with great force. The thief could either wait quietly to be caught or cut off his/her fingers.

Internal Intervention: Another defense is a set-up that requires intervention from inside the area defended before the "lock" can be opened. A simple version of this is a bar across a doorway, which must be removed from inside the protected room before the door can be opened. The modern time lock embodies this principle, only permitting the lock to be opened at certain predetermined times.

Record Keeping: The addition of a counter which keeps track of the number of times a lock has been opened lets the owner know if there has been any unauthorized entry. While this does not make it harder to overcome the lock, it can be very useful when information and not goods are protected by the lock. One interesting variant on this theme is the signature knot, which is so complex only the creator can untie/retie it. Any thief will have to cut the knot to access the material it protects. This will inform the owner that his seal has been broken.

A NOTE ON FORCE: This discussion has concentrated on overcoming locks non-destructively. Sometimes brute force will be the best way to get at treasure protected by a lock. Remember, however, that a good lock can be a valuable treasure in its own right.

IN LKoS #3: Yo-yos: no adventurer should be without one!

+++++
DEFENSELESS RAVINGS--continued by Todd Hintz

Instead of comparing this hypothetical gadget to something, maybe Nolte could simply explain how he'd like it to be set up and worked. Putting it next to FORTH didn't really seem to be a good example.

I can tell this is an unpopular view, especially with the English people, but I don't mind if people who produce fanzines make a profit by it. Tanstaafl. It'd be nice to give them something for the time and effort they spend in putting out a magazine. If there's people who want to volunteer their services, that's nice. But I won't complain if they throw in a little something extra into the price. (Now pitch the tomatoes.)

Minneapolis in '73!

+++++
MARK GOLDBERG writes that a "Bag of Hoarding" (which confiscates 10% of what's put into it) would work well in his area as nobody takes the time to count out thousands of coins so a "tithe" probably wouldn't be noticed. A dead PC being carried is another story. I'd probably have the 'tithes' show up in another large bag (that detected as magic, of course) that the Hoarding Wizard also made (and had stolen from him)."

FROM THE FIFTY SEVENTH DATE 11 11
Once more out of the Gate/Port, and (1) 19/24/81
Who still gets mail at 128 Main St. / Pittsburg, CA 94553-3419
And often accepts (non-collect) calls at (415) 452-4371

COMPUTERS AS [FANTASY] ROLEPLAYING GAME MASTERS

Can a computer GM a roleplaying game? The trend of thought in A&E has been generally pessimistic, for some very good reasons. Allow me, however, to put on my rose colored glasses and review the question from a (slightly) more optimistic view. I wish to look at some of the more popular FRPGs now available for Personal Computers; take a (very) brief excursion into the mysterious world of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for a look at some programs which touch upon our subject; and if I'm lucky figure out a way of relating some of the "features" (techniques/philosophy/problems) that we find in these programs to similar "features" that we find in the games of human GMs. At the end of this little journey I hope to show that, while not yet ready to appear in our very own homes, the computer GM might well be possible using the technology (and programming techniques) available today.

Before we begin our journey, I think it would be wise for me to establish the ultimate goal a bit more concretely. Pause for a moment, and think back to the **absolutely worst** game you've ever had the misfortune to suffer through. If your luck's been as bad as mine, that game was a hack'n'slash, monty haul run in which the only activity other than dungeon crawling was resupplying/healing in the "town" located conveniently near to said dungeon. (In other words, the type of game one wouldn't even wish on a munchkin.) Yet much as we would like to deny it, surely that game falls within the boundaries of what we call FRPGs. If we must give the pitiful wretch who ran that game the honorable title of GM, then must we not do the same for a computer program if it manages to "achieve" the same "results"? And, strangely enough, there is at least one program available on home computers that "seems" to do just that.

The program I am referring to is Wizardry (by Andrew Greenberg and Robert Woodhead), one of the most popular programs to appear for the APPLE (and now available on the IBM as well). A large amount of critical praise has been lavished upon it (and its sequels: KNIGHT OF DIAMONDS and LEGACY OF LLYLGAMYN) and its popularity has even led to a spate of programs designed so that one can cheat the game. Some psychologists have even used it as a therapeutic tool! Malarkey! The game is excellent at what it does, which is almost exactly what I described above. WIZARDRY has 10 levels of dungeon, plenty of monsters, a D&D "inspired" combat and magic system, and a conveniently located castle/market (rather than town) with an Inn, Trading Post, Temple (for resurrections), and a Tavern for gathering the party. This castle is indeed convenient - the dungeon lies directly below it, and is kept stocked with a variety of ecologically improbable monsters for the benefit of would-be adventurers.

Elements such as these are prevalent in many bad games (and a few good ones as well), as well as being a traditional part of what is WIZARDRY's major direction, POWERGAMING. In game terms, the only reward/incentive is the gain of those joys to the powergamer's heart: GOLD/EP/LEVELS/ITEMS. [The actual "winning" of the game does negate this a bit, as money and items are stripped from the successful characters. In the second scenario however, no such loss of power occurs when the game is "won."] The program further encourages the powergamer by its means of play balance --- a level-by-level power increase of

tougher opponents (and greater gains). [Nothing terribly wrong with this traditional means of play-balance; it is just that it does encourage powergaming.] Finally, the tilt toward the powergaming orientation is exaggerated by the near absence of the other orientations from the game -- Wizardry does have a measure of WARGAMING (particularly in the need for proper utilization of magic in the context of multi-character combat) but that is about it. Earlier I suggested that if we call the worst human GM a GM then we should consider Wizardry to be a GM as well. Wizardry does not deserve such an appellation, in large part because of its lack of balance among the game orientations. Even the worst human GM can (and at some point in his career does) imbue his NPCs with some "life", and even the worst GM tries to give the players some story background (some "plot" seeds) before they set off on the adventure. These are things which Wizardry lacks. To find a better mixture of the RPG orientations, we must look at WIZARDRY's major challenger to pre-eminence.

ULTIMA (parts I, II, and III -- the discussion here deals mainly with ULTIMA II as that is the program I am most familiar with), by "Lord British", is a program that improves on Wizardry in many ways. There are still dungeons, but they are part of an entire world of mountains, plains, sea, villages, towns, and castles. The shops are present here too, but have a real, physical presence in the towns and villages, rather than being amorphous areas of convenience. The pure Wargaming aspect of Ultima is not as developed as it is in Wizardry (mainly because Ultima is a single character game -- though ULTIMA III has introduced multiple character parties -- but also due to such things as the "invincibility" of frigates, for example), and in some ways the Powergaming aspect is even more extreme. (There being no "encumbrance" as there is in Wizardry, one is encouraged to stockpile massive amounts of items.) In Ultima however, the net effect is that the game seems much less of a Powergame than Wizardry. This is because Ultima makes better use of the other two orientations of RPGs.

STORYTELLING: Wizardry has the bare minimum of storytelling. The goal of the scenario is not even stated at the start; instead it has to be discovered accidentally by the player in the course of their otherwise apparently aimless wandering. (This has been improved on in Knight of Diamonds -- there they at least mention the goal in the instruction booklet. I should also say that the wandering about in Wizardry does have some sense of exploration about it...at first; this is a dungeon after all, and marching along the corridors soon wears thin.) In Ultima the goal of the scenario is announced in the rule booklet. More importantly, the play of the game is used to reinforce the storyline -- clues and riddles to solving the scenario are discovered during the course of play. Also, the story progresses "episodically", so that a series of intermediate goals must be attained before further progress is possible. This intertwining of game with storyline is a great improvement over Wizardry, and is made possible in large part because of Lord British's attempt (unsuccessful though it may be in most respects) to simulate the last orientation, from which our term RPG is derived.

ROLEPLAYING : In Wizardry Character Classes exist, but there's no roleplay. The only things that exist in Wizardry are "monsters", and the PCs are thus given no chance to roleplay (and functionally become the same as monsters themselves). [There is some use of Alignment in Wizardry, but given that Alignment in D&D is many times more complex and still is only a poor

roleplaying tool at best, the use of this is Wizardry is next to useless. Wizardry does allow some monsters to be "friendly" - which means only that you do not have to fight them, and the penalty/benefits for acting against alignment in such cases seems to be enforced once in a blue moon.] Ultima has its monsters as well, of course, but the world of Ultima also has a few NPCs, which provide information regarding the storyline of the game. In the Ultima game the player is allowed a "Transact" option with which he can communicate with the NPCs, thus picking up gossip from a bartender, planetary co-ordinates from an astronaut, or information from an oracle. As only some of the many NPCs say anything useful (though some of the non-useful messages are "amusing", or intended to be) there is an incentive to interact with the NPCs. [And continue exploring to locate more NPCs that Wizardry lacks with its endless dungeons. The fact that the world of Ultima is much more varied than Wizardry's - even including trips to other planets - encourages this even more.] The creation of NPCs, and the ability to interact with them, is a large step forward to encouraging Roleplaying, and Lord British should be given a large amount of credit for implementing this step. The result in Ultima is far from perfect, however. The "humorous" messages that I mentioned consist of in-jokes about various personalities in the micro-computer business, which interfere with the background that has been developed and thus tend to undermine the game as a whole. This is a small problem which can easily be corrected; unfortunately, the limited nature of the "Transaction" option used in Ultima is much larger - and much harder to correct. One "Transacts" by pressing the "T" key and then indicating the direction that the person you wish to speak to is standing. The program then responds with a message - usually innocuous, along the lines of a fighter saying 'Ugh, me tough,' but occasionally of some interest. Unfortunately, the limited nature of the "Transact" command allows for only a limited response by the program. To explore this limitation just a bit further, we need to take a look at the interface that is used between player and computer.

COMMUNICATION : In games with human GMs we speak of the need to compromise between Realism and Playability. Such a compromise also needs to be made in computer GMed games, but added to this is the further need to compromise between Communication and Playability. As those of us this side of Alla Rd. know, typing is HARD! Poor typing can slow a game down quite a bit. So both Wizardry and Ultima make use of single-key, menu driven commands to interface between the computer and the user. Wizardry uses on-screen, "layered" menus for the most part - the keys to press (and their functions) are displayed on the screen, with the choice of key options varying with what part of the program the player is currently using (and with some key choices leading to sub-menus with further choices.) Ultima does not display its commands on-screen (they are listed in the rule book, and a less than perfect mnemonic system is used to help you remember them), and very few of its commands are "layered"; instead, almost all of the keys represent single commands which are available throughout the game play (in Wizardry the menu is limited to a few keys at a time, and the meaning of a key can differ from one menu to another.) Single keystrokes do make the program much easier, faster, and more enjoyable to play. Unfortunately, they severely limit the ability of the player to communicate with the program by limiting the number of options available to the player (and thus limiting the complexity and quantity of the situations that the program can handle.) Can one play the Moonlight Sonata on a two key piano? No more can one bring a character to life relying on thirty or so keys on the keyboard. One can purchase spells in Ultima, but there is no way that one can question a Wizard about the Wizard's Guild. To get across our ideas we must use language, and even if it does make things awkward,

typing our words to the program will be of great help. For outweigh its problems. To see some of the advantages that are offered we must leave RPGs for a moment to look at a closely related genre of computer games.

ZORK is a series of three games (amazing how these things run in threes!) by David Lebling and Marc Blank (among others) of the "Adventure" genre. While related to RPGs in some ways, adventures differ in some large respects: (a) a fixed character - "you", (b) much greater emphasis on problem solving, (c) much simpler - if any - combat, and (d) far greater interaction between the program and the player. This last is because the parser used in adventure games analyzes full words (and sentences) rather than single key-strokes. This ability opens up many, many more possibilities that the program can deal with; unfortunately, most programs do not take advantage of this to any large extent. Most adventure games have traditionally used only a two-word parser (usually a verb - noun combination) and have a very limited "vocabulary" of words that they "understand". [This often leads to the program responding that it does not understand what the player input - often destroying the illusion of communication/understanding that has been strived for, as well as slowing the game down.] Probably the key feature in the success of Zork has been the sophistication of its parser. Zork can understand adjectives and prepositions as well as verbs and nouns, it can understand them in the form of full sentences (or even two sentences at a time), and it has a larger than normal vocabulary of around 600 words. Because of this, Zork understands more (and responds in more varied ways) than other adventure games, and this sophistication in turn lends itself to more sophisticated puzzles and story-telling. [Including in games such as Deadline the sense of a world existing outside of the character. Including the best attempts yet at creating character within computers games. None of the RPGs we have looked at have created NPCs anywhere close to as "alive" as Michael Berlyn's robots in Cyborg or, especially, Suspended. And without characters in the NPCs, we can hardly expect the player to bother giving his PCs any character either.] Zork is far from perfect in this respect - all too often it also responds that it cannot understand such simple words as "table" - but it is a large step in the right direction. Though not the largest step to be taken. To look at the programs which wear these seven-league boots, however, we must leave the micro- for the macrocosm.

REPRESENTATION : How do human GMs create a world? In broad terms, they organize their ideas in such a way that a system of "rules" about their world is formed (analogously to the game rules upon which the world is run.) City A is so far from City B, which is the capital of That Country, which borders This Country. Five Gold Pieces buy a month at the inn, a good dagger, a round of drinks. Hobbits are short with hairy feet, elves are tall with naked feet. Whether written out in exhaustive detail or kept totally in the head, the GM has formulated the rules/relationships which control the image of his or her world. Based on those rules, the GM can tell you the rulers of Ruralla for the past thousand years, or whether the gem you just stole is magical. The programs we have looked at are quite capable of doing the latter, and quite unable to do the former. The data about the next room may be part of the program, but until you move into that room none of these programs know anything about it. They are programmed so that they deal with the here and now rather than with the past or future. This knowledge fixed to location is not all that bad (first, because it makes the programming more efficient, and second because in many of these games the player is supposed to be kept in the dark about such things) as physical objects are linked to locations in this manner - a message written on the wall does not move off of

the wall and start wandering the corners. Unfortunately, this linking prevents the program from any great knowledge of the world background - even the best might be able to respond to "Who is Zarbazz the Sleeper?," but at the same time not know what the Terrillian Empire is, because such knowledge must be treated as a special case rather than an intimate part of the program. Knight of Diamonds may ask a riddle which you must answer before moving on, but the program cannot ask a different riddle later, or judge if an answer is right even if it is not an exact match. Simply put, the program has no background against which to judge such things; it does not have any rules which it can apply in such situations, and thus must remain inflexible. [I recall Dave Arneson saying that such was M.A.R. Barker's knowledge of Tekumel that you could name any spot on the world, and Mr. Barker could tell you all about it.]

Does this mean that it is impossible to simulate such knowledge with a computer program? Fortunately no; it just means that no RPG program has managed to do it as yet. In the big world however, the world of large, mainframe computers (of CDCs, CRAYS, and other nice number crunchers), there are programs which do exactly this - represent knowledge and rules. Such programs are at the cutting edge of current research in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Let us take an all too brief look at how such knowledge is simulated in a few programs which touch upon the subject at hand.

The Big FRAME Up : What did Henry the Fifth's (the "Black Prince") castle and court look like (pagentry wise)? More than a few of us have no idea, but if forced to take a guess we might provide details of a "typical" picture of medieval court life that we have "stored" in our heads. Such a picture might be made up of descriptions that we read, pictures and films that we have seen, perhaps the sets or costumes of a play or two. Only coincidentally would the details match the true picture, yet based on those details we would definitely say that a picture of cowboys and indians was not a picture of Henry's court. Or, to use another example, what do you do when you wish to get a book from the library? Perhaps you look up the title in a card catalog, cross reference it with the call number, search the stacks until you find that particular title, bring it to the circulation desk, and then check it out and leave. But if it is a reference book, you may need to read it at the library instead. Or it may be a periodical on microfilm? Each of these circumstances requires a different set of responses, which a human is able to make with some ease. Yet these same responses might be quite inappropriate in another setting, such as a rare book store. How do we determine which responses to use? In many ways, by a process similar to the way we draw ourselves a picture of a scene we have never seen. We use our knowledge...of the particular situation when possible, of analogous situations which might suggest a method of dealing with the current situation when specific knowledge is missing. In essence, we follow a "script" or "frame" that provides us with the skeletal body of a situation, on which we place the flesh of our knowledge/experiences. To have a computer perform in a human-like way then, we must provide the computer with a frame of reference that fits the activity we are trying to simulate, as well as the specific types of "knowledge" that it can hang from that frame. The frame of reference provides the program with the "common sense" assumptions needed to be able to "extrapolate" further information about the world (or the limited domain that forms the program "world", at any rate).

The first (and one of the most famous) program to make extensive use of the frame/script approach was Roger Schank's SAM (Script Applier Mechanism), where the frames are used to simulate the situations that one might encounter in a

restaurant. For example, provided with the data that Joe Diner had ordered a steak, the SAM program can "tell" that Joe was hungry, entered the restaurant, and placed his order. It could also "assume" that he was shown to a table and given a menu, though the possibilities might exist that Joe could have seated himself and ordered without looking at the menu (thus lowering the probability that the assumed actions occurred). The program could not tell if Joe enjoyed his meal, as in the world of the program that event has not yet taken place. (However, it would be possible to add some rules to the frame - such as the type of food served and its quality compared with Joe's taste - and "extrapolate" the outcome of Joe's meal based on the "cross reference" rating of the restaurant.)

As can be seen, the frame offers greatly increased flexibility to the program. Such flexibility however, stretches only as far as the knowledge used in the program, for the knowledge provides the the details/experiences (the flesh on the bones) that are applied by the frame. In one of the best programs yet designed of computer "storytelling" - James Meehan's TALE-SPIN - the data is used to provide the program with details of the fairy-tale-like "Bear World". The structures used by the program to generate its stories include :

(1) The DATA Base : This contains the detailed descriptions of items like an initial setting, the characters and their goals (including such details as where they are, what they eat, etc.), and the relationships between the characters (on such scales as competition, dominance, and familiarity.)

(2) The RULES Base : The "rules" of the frame; generally a set of "situation-leads-to-action" rules, which often take a form similar to a series of IF This THEN That sequences. These rules define plausible sequences of events, plus pre-conditions specifying the situations when these sequences might occur. IF John Bear is Tired THEN he will Rest (unless some overriding precondition, such as extreme hunger, takes precedence.) Essentially, the program examines the initial data base and tries to apply those story fragments (rules) which the data base satisfies. [This is done through "goal-directed backward chaining", by which the program moves from the established goal backwards to the problem, uncovering areas where it does not yet have sufficient facts to apply one of its rules, and trying to collect needed facts by finding intermediate goals for the character which it can fit the data and rules to. IF John Bear is Hungry, THEN he wishes to Eat, but IF he has No Food THEN he must Get some Food. And IF he does Not Know Where Food Is THEN he must Ask Someone Else Where To Find Food. A process not unlike working a maze from the center out.]

(3) The CONTROLLING PROCESSES : This is the "smart" section of the program that actually applies the rules. Thus in the example above, it is this section of the program that actually tells the computer which rules to apply, when a rule has been satisfied, which "assumptions" to make, etc.

Perhaps the greatest advantage of the Frame is that it need not be tied to specific data - if changes are made to the data base, the rules base will still be able to apply the data. Within reason, of course - we must keep in mind that not all changes will provide good results. If John Bear only has to reach out

his paw to find some honey when he is hungry we have not created a very interesting story. Small changes in the data can have large results however; as simple a change as hiding the honey could result in a long search by John Bear, or even end up in his death.

How does the frame fit in with a GM program? Well, in the example of the player(s) visiting the Wizard that I alluded to before, the program could conceivably check on such things as (a) Is there a guild?, (b) Does the wizard belong to the guild (if there is one)?, (c) Would he tell the players anything about the guild even if he knows about it?

This last begins to introduce true roleplay into the program. To my mind, there are two requirements for roleplay. One, as above, is that roleplay is a two-way street. The GM can hardly expect the players to develop characters in the absence of characterization on the part of the GM (through the NPCs that the GM has created.) When we speak of the GM "playing" the world we mean play as in playing a part, and that extends to the NPCs as well as everything else that makes up the GM's world. Second, there must be the possibility for the players to role-play as well. For this possibility to exist, the character that the player creates must be able to change as the game is played, to be able to act (and to react) as the player desires (or the character demands) rather than as the program allows the player to act. In the games that presently exist, the only things that change about the character are the items that are carried, and such game-required stats as Hit Points. A frame oriented program, which includes the character stats as part of its data base (which can easily be changed) also has the ability to define character interactions (and its own actions in response to the character) as part of its rules base. Whereas in Ultima one can "destroy" a town, only to come back later and find things unchanged, the character in a frame based program might well have to face the consequences of such actions (a price on their head, revenge squads, etc.). While hardly allowing for the range of actions/emotions in the best human GMed games, we could at least expect a great improvement over current circumstances.

While frames point the way to better RPGs, they are not without problems of their own. First, they are of necessity LARGE! They take up an incredible amount of space to simulate even such relatively simple "worlds" as restaurants. Given that in an RPG they need to simulate a world (as well as the game rules, as well as the presence of a GM), RPG systems will need to be ENORMOUS! This in turn will tend to slow the program down to such an extent that it might well be unplayable. And, of course, large and complex programs are very difficult to write (and debug, and maintain, and update) in the first place. All of these are indications as to why it is on main-frame systems that SAM, TALE-SPIN and other so-called "expert systems" have been designed and run. Writing a good GM program will be at least as difficult as being a good GM.

WRAP UP : Can a computer GM a Roleplaying game? I believe it can, though it has yet to be implemented. [Why has it not been done? Because those with the equipment/money to implement such a program have no interest in doing so, and those with an interest do not have the resources needed. Give me several million dollars and I can all but guarantee that I could develop such a program in a couple of years time - there are a lot of good, hungry programmers out there who would love to work on such a project - or give me a few hundred thousand and I might be able to have one by the end of the decade.] As far as micro-computers go, no program has yet approached the level of sophistication needed to be considered a GM. There is still room for improvement however, and I believe that a good partial-implementation is possible (perhaps on the level

of one who does a good job GMing pre-packaged scenarios.) As things now stand, the Wargame aspect of games such as Wizardry (or even EAMON, the public-domain roleplay/adventure hybrid available for the Apple) is adequate. The representation of the world in Ultima is very close to being adequate (though at the price of other game aspects), and the Powergaming aspect of all these games is handled very well. With only a little effort the storytelling can be bolstered, and any effort in the direction of roleplay will be an improvement. It is true that many of these programs are "pushing the limits" of the computer, but those limits are often ones that the programs themselves have defined. Consider this: on an Apple II, Wizardry requires 1 disk drive and 48K of Random Access Memory, Ultima requires the same, and Zork only needs 32K of RAM. Because of (partially still true) historical circumstances game programmers do not want to exceed the magical numbers of 48(K) and 1(disk drive) for fear of losing a market for the program. [This despite the fact that it is very cheap to upgrade an Apple to 64K, for example.] Yet the Apple IIe can use 128K (albeit not easily), the new CP/M Plus can also use 128K and more, and the IBM PC now comes with 128K standard. If one adds up the RAM requirements for the three programs mentioned, one finds it totals 128K!! And yes, I know that it isn't that simple (especially with heavily disk based programs as the above. But eliminating areas of duplication (the various ways of defining the character, the contrasting texts of the story lines, etc.) one can see that a very good game is quite possible on a micro computer, if only someone would write it. (Which is not likely from a professional programmer. 128K does limit the market, as would a requirement to use two disk drives if needed.) Still, the opportunity is there, and it is only a matter of time before somebody grabs it!

A Few Random Thoughts:

I stated above that the GM expert-system would need to be implemented on a main frame. But how long will this state of affairs last? While pushing the state of the art, the technology does exist today to put the equivalent of a main frame (and more) in your living room. Deliveries of the 32032 chip in OEM quantities will be at a cost of under \$400 each. 256K RAM chips are starting to reach the market, and if they maintain the pattern of other RAMs we should see a price in the range of \$20-\$25 each in the next few years. Removable cartridge 5 1/2 Mb hard disks have been announced at \$500 each in OEM quantities. Given past trends to extrapolate from these facts, I do not see it as at all impossible that a 32-bit system with 1-4 Megabytes of RAM (depending on whether 1M or 4M chips become the next standard after the 256K chip) and a 20-40 Mb hard disk (or other means of high density, quick read/write storage) with virtual memory will be available by 1990 at the equivalent of what a LISA system costs today. And a LISA equivalent system would then cost the equivalent of what an Apple IIe now costs. That is an awful lot of machine to play around with. [OK, all you computer fan can stop laughing now! Just remember Pournelle's Law.]

As mentioned before, one area in which the computer GM is in trouble is the communication interface. Speech recognition is still quite ways from the sophistication needed to be used as part of a GM program. Even if advanced computers such as the above do make it into the home, how many homes will have multi-user and/or multi-keyboard systems. Yet offices or university computer centers are hardly the most conducive areas for playing an RPG. Perhaps a highly portable keyboard (such as the PC Jr. infrared keyboard) is the answer. Or perhaps the "caller" system will make a comeback, with the best typist acting

as the "caller". One technique which a more limited game (such as the current micro state of the art) could use for multiple players might be to use paddles. If one is to use a menu, the selections could be based on turning a paddle just as easily as they can be based on pushing a key. I know that one can have up to four paddle (or paddle-like) inputs on an Apple, which with 2 characters to a paddle would allow up to 8 players. Given the limitations of menus however, I hope that the keyboard, despite the inconvenience, will continue to be used.

Graphics. Ah yes, the crux of the matter. The graphics of Ultima are glorious, a programming triumph that immensely helps in presenting the "world" of the program. Yet the room that the graphics take up might well have been put to better use. In non-computer games miniatures are nice, but one does not need them to play. Instead, miniatures are useful as an aid to gaming, not as end in themselves. One takes pride in a well painted miniature, but one should not value it ahead of the character it represents (well, not during the game, anyway.) This suggests the following "rule": Graphics should not be placed ahead of the FRP related elements of the programs. (Write a graphics package if you want to do so, not an FRPG!) Start with the basics - GMs have been able to "paint" word pictures for years, so why not have the program do the same? Miniatures are used most often in conducting melee, so that is the place to start with graphics. But even here, one might be able to use text if necessary; after all, most of us have used spare dice to represent monsters now and again. Character initials to represent characters and monster initials and numbers to represent the monsters would be serviceable, low-res symbols (in color) might be better, and a high-res "battle-board" a la Ultima would be better still (and real-time, 3-D animation - perhaps using video disc technology as well - would be great.) But not at the expense of other program elements. Start with servicability, then expand if you have the room.

Despite my optimism, we are only dealing with the GM as implementer here. A program that performs the designing functions that all GMs who are designer must deal with (world, plot, and character creation) is still a long way off. So too is a campaign game - the rules for a single scenario are much easier/briefer to design. Besides, multiple scenarios allow the programmer(s) to make extra money - just ask TSR.

Given the number of computer fen in this apa, I would not be surprised to see one of them develop a (partial) GM program (if they had the time). Or a bunch of them working together, considering that most major programs seem to be group efforts these days. If a group did get together to do such a program, they would have to consider the following: What computer to aim for? How to distribute the vast wealth that would come there way? What language to use to develop the program? This last is worth looking at (well, at least I will look at it, after stretching this far to bring it up.) It seems to me that only two or three are worth considering for a micro-computer project. Machine (assembly) language, of course, but then you are limited to only one machine. Pascal - UCSD to be preferred. Why? Even though a lot of UCSD stinks, it is available for all machines (and is usually the first operating system to be transported to a new machine). It is also fairly compatible with standard Pascal, and its slowness can be compensated for by faster machines and/or native code compilers where available. But perhaps the best choice of a language would be 'C'. It offers excellent speed, good compatibility between many of its versions at the source level, and is available on all of the

popular machines (including the 6502, Z80, 8086/88 and 68000 chips). None of these languages are as well known or widely available as BASIC, but then, who in their right mind would try to match the various versions of BASIC with one another, let alone try to develop a complex program in them. [Of course, for the "expert system" GM I expect that one of the AI languages would be used. LISP seems the most likely candidate - it is well-nigh universally available in the AI field, has proved itself capable of writing other more specialized languages, and is one of the few AI languages that I know of that has compilers written for it to improve the execution speed of the finished program. But Smalltalk (with graphics built in, "actor" oriented to a greater extent than LISP) and PROLOG (which is a "rules" oriented language well suited to both frames and games) are well worth considering as well.

Speaking of languages, does anyone know whatever became of DDL? The last time I heard anything about DDL (which stands for Dungeon Designer Language) was at Westercon way back in 1979. Was it ever implemented?

Finally, a last question. How many of you have modems? And, of those who do, how many of you PBM (Play By Modem)? I'm about to purchase a modem, and have been toying with the possibility of running a PBMo game. I'm not too sold on buying BBS software as well (Bulletin Boards seem to be the traditional method of PBMo gaming) however, particularly when that would be the only use that it would be put to. (The BBS software, not the modem.) Of those who have played both, how does a PBMo compare with a PBM (and how do both compare with face-to-face, for that matter.)?

WHOOOPS, AN UPDATE : One of the legendary (to me, since I've never actually played it) mainframe F"RP"Gs is "ROGUE". I have heard many good things about this program, and I now may finally have a chance to find out for myself. A version of "ROGUE" has just been released for the IBM PC. Perhaps this is another step in the right direction; we shall have to see.

...and another one bites the dust... approx. 6200 words

THE ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE (Letters page) Issue 7 (I think....)
being a mainly comment 'zine written by Peter A. Clarke; typed by Lee with thanks
3 Beddington Grove, Wallington, Surrey, SM6 8LB; Tel 01-773-0330

It was good to see the vast quantity of contributors who were able to make it to Games Day this year. I think I managed to meet most of you, although I was only there on Saturday.

Now for some comments - first a few on 98

ELLIS SIMPSON: I would think that roleplaying a character in the armed forces of a modern state would be pretty restricting. At the lowest ranks, you might disagree with orders but could hardly disobey them. So any choices based on personal character will be limited, and the game will be about effective tactics. Do you recommend that people in this sort of a game should only control an individual?

The problem is that the army doesn't really want individuals. I am prepared to be corrected, but I think the game would be concerned only with the short periods of action, making no mention of the long periods of boredom. More important, the characters cannot choose when to commit themselves to combat and when to avoid it: in this as in other things, the important choices will be taken for them.

BROOKS & FLIN: On "good phrases for Champions," how about the immortal line: "It's a long shot, but it just might work."//For a really random comment (about a writeup which I do like), the Knights of Ascension would seem to me to be more at home in the Land than in Middle Earth. Sauron has had a terrible effect indeed!

SAPIENZA & ROBERTSON: Yes, I know you don't write in the same 'zine, but you both commented on my cts on technological and social development (made in 95). I did not say that social change always brought about technological development nor that that was the only method of bringing on technological change. But I do think that there is reason to suppose that it has been the case in the past. In China, printing was useful as a tool of an already existing bureaucracy; in Europe it would not have been necessary but for a preceding increase in literacy. As a negative example, Africa did not develop a high technology as soon as Europe did, not because it was backward but because its technology was sufficient for its needs (which before the arrival of the Europeans included quite sophisticated states).

My main point was that technology does not exist in a vacuum but only in relation to the society which supports it. Nor is technology everything. Rome defeated the barbarians in its period of expansion because of its ability to organize. This same ability led to the draining of the Fens during the Roman occupation of Britain--a task not attempted again until the 17th century.

Now on to 99

ALL THE BRITS: we only just made the coup, but then a number of contributors from these shores were missing so we didn't do too badly (thanks in no small part to Dan).

DAVID NALLE: Just to prove I am happy to agree on some of the things you say--the point about the Thieves Guild has been needed for a long time. Certainly they could not be public institutions, but the gangs which would take the Guild's place could be highly organized. They might even be able to penetrate the ranks of the official guilds and governments of a town, putting profits from illegal activities into more lawful activities (and thus having an advantage over the law-abiding citizens). This would be an extreme circumstance but might approach fairly close to the idea of a thieves guild. However, having reached such respectability, the crooks wouldn't want any other criminals operating in their patch.

BILL KARIEVA: I enjoy hill-walking. I enjoy social interaction with my friends. The two are extremely compatible. Simply to show that two other things are incompatible (or compatible) does not say anything about the relationship of two other things.

As to the main point, if I did not enjoy the company of the other players in a game, I would not want to play. I must admit that the group in which I have played has not been heavily into roleplaying as described by a number of people in A&E. Few of my acquaintances "switch themselves off" and commit themselves to the character's attitudes and knowledge, at least not for any length of time. Perhaps on this side of the Atlantic the game is not taken as seriously.

Finally, you just can't say that "the best things in life are not free" and expect everyone to agree; sweeping statements like this ~~never~~ are rarely valuable, since they tend to alienate people who are trying to see the point you are making. In short, do as I say, not as I write.

NICK LARTER: I don't think you will get closer to your aim of unique characters as opposed to classes by adding to the number of different classes which might be chosen. This is especially true since the types you offer are combinations of already existing classes, without anything original in the way of abilities. To me, these are not classes (i.e. more or less arbitrarily defined groups of skills with particular limitations) but backgrounds, which explain the range of a character's skills.

PAUL WATERS: I trust you meant 1199. (It looked like 1099 in my copy.) Incidentally, it was not clear at the time just who had the better claim to the throne following Richard's death. In the face of the aggression of Philip of France, the older, more experienced John was to be preferred to young Prince Arthur.

Going on from this, I see the contrast between Richard's success and John's failure as one of charisma. Under Richard, people suffered as heavy taxation as ever they did under John, but his charisma was enough to maintain his popularity. John never was popular among his barons and, more important, he did not have their confidence. So, if you use CHARISMA to mean anything other than appearance, the career of King John is worth a look. John was indeed a Bad King but not, despite his reputation, a particularly Bad Man.

APRIL LEE: Fine cover--you did us proud.

LEE GOLD: Yes, I see your point. A third problem I now see (on looking back) that I did not raise is how (if at all) one can have a "party" which involves a group of such powerful people. I suppose one way is to have them attend a royal court or be brought together to give counsel to the king. But such situations will be quite restricted and will, in any case, be few in number. One possibility might be to make all the players part of a lord's following (not necessarily unimportant people in their own right) with one player taking on the role of lord. Again this brings in the problems associated with characters having to follow some discipline which I mentioned in my comment to Ellis Simpson.

My tentative conclusions are that:

1) As you say, the likely plots will not play like standard adventures but do allow for a high degree of roleplaying.

2) If the normal event is not a normal adventure, it is likely that many such sessions cannot and should not involve more than two people: the player and the referee. This is because there will be many situations in which the availability or unavailability of information will be crucial. It is never easy for a player to roleplay when he has information that his character doesn't; and I suspect this would be more common in these games even than in more standard types of adventure.

SENILE SAGE #7+1

Robert J (and Ruie L) Clifford, 312 Westmoreland Dr., Dunbar, WV 25064
retyped by the gracious Lee Gold

We have just returned from our extended European vacation (the first vacation in three years). I haven't had a chance to finish unpacking yet, but I see before me three large envelopes from Lee, which is some indication as to just how far I have fallen behind. During the trip, we have gathered information and impressions which, we believe, are worth sharing. However, since we posted most of the documentation (to save weight) by ship (to save money), they will have to await a future submission. Instead I will describe Treasure Trap as promised previously.

I attempted to meet with MIKE LEWIS in England, but fate seemed determined to frustrate us. My wife and I spent three weekends in England. On the first, my wife was sick. The second, Mike was sick. The third coincided with Games Day, so Mike again was not available. During the week, his work intruded and prevented any meeting. We were able to speak a few times by phone (the British must have one of the worst phone systems of any civilized country), and he did provide the number to contact Treasure Trap. My wife and I attended on Games Day weekend. (My wife is preparing her own impressions, which will follow my review.)

Just getting to the site by public transport is an adventure in itself. But I do not consider missed connections, buses that never arrived, etc. interesting or enjoyable. If any of you wish to attend, either have an auto or be prepared to spend a lot of time and effort getting there. As to whether it is worth the trouble, you will have to judge for yourself.

Since there were two wargame and one SF conventions that same weekend, there were only about 50 adventurers present instead of the usual 2-300. Unfortunately, two-thirds of the staff was also absent, so our 1 PM run did not start until 5 PM. I admit the available staff was friendly, helpful and informative; and the delay gave us ample opportunity to observe and ask questions.

As described by Mike Lewis in his article, the Basic Adventure cost £10. A membership cost an additional £36, which allows an individual an infinite number of runs in a year or 12 trips over three years. In addition, there is an additional charge for each run. In addition to the standard runs, there are specials which last for complete weekends. A two week-long adventure is planned to run in the coming summer. Special runs can be booked at about £1 per person per hour.

While the site is in the middle of nowhere, accommodations are available. Floor space for sleeping bags is available for £1, although many individuals seem to run all night. For those not prepared to rough it, there are a number of good B&Bs (Bed and breakfast at a private home which rents out a few rooms) around at quite reasonable rates.

Treasure Trap is run almost every weekend and even during the week some adventures are run, particularly during the summer. The operation appears to be an economic success, with plans to open other sites around the country. The company had attempted to acquire a complete village which had been built as a prop for a film. Unfortunately the contract called for the destruction of the town after filming.

The facility used, Pickforton Castle, is a Victorian idea of what a Norman castle should be like. While only about a century old, it still gives the proper feel and is much easier to get around in. The castle is rented from the owners, who are not always happy with what is going on. The organization is definitely "fannish," which leads to some of the problems. While the castle itself was

obviously not in pristine condition, the housekeeping and even vandalism have made some areas appear in worse shape than many actual ruins we have seen. The trash, garbage and empty beer bottles covering the floors can give a very poor initial impression. But with the large number of high school age individuals present, I guess it's not surprising. The layout is prevented from becoming too familiar by the use of barriers: canvas painted to look like the wall. Thus the layout can be changed each run.

The game system is a combination of D&D and RQ. Character classes and levels are both used. The combat and hit location is definitely derived from RQ. The magic system appears to be a combination. Wounds are delivered by dye-coated weapons, with damage determined by the color. (The values of the various colors are continually changed after players began basing tactics on the colors seen. There were a number of amusing incidents after the first change until the players caught on.) Spells require specific phrasing and/or actions. Any lapse results in failure, a nice touch. Much better than, "I'm casting a _____ spell." It helps demonstrate the problems of acting under stress.

Now for the adventures themselves. First I recommend that every roleplayer participate in such a run just to experience the problems faced by PCs. Movement, searching, and more important fighting in the dark are practices that must be experienced. And you can forget about mapping. Fighting in darkness or worse (I'll explain shortly) with no light source or candles held by those behind you or stuck on your shield is something not addressed by any group with which I am familiar. Fights in rooms in which smoke bombs have been released or in rooms lit by strobes definitely leave an impression.

As for the nature of the scenarios, they appear quite good. While they might suffer from lack of a completely coherent campaign, they are well constructed with consistent organization.

I have seen many paper games not nearly as well justified. Hack and Slash approaches will almost assuredly fail. There are also "helpful" NPCs as well as interesting clues and puzzles which you ignore at your own peril. When you do fight, you had better have good organization and plans. Several individuals were willing to discuss instances when failure to act intelligently and decisively led to disaster. For instance, one party was warned to refrain from harming "woodland creatures." Later they attacked a couple of forest goblins (they were monsters) who would have been willing to help them--and indeed were the only means by which they could find the object of their quest. There were a few survivors.

The NPCs or individuals met during the course of the adventure are rather well handled from what I could see and definitely added to the run. They also help determine the direction and mood by their advice and actions.

According to the designers, the basic adventure is designed to induce confusion and panic. It succeeded admirably. We started off well, with good organization and tactics. After picking up two NPCs (I still can't think of a better term), things degenerated. With the party egged on by suggestions and exhortations, coordination became impossible, with the leader (me) reduced to acting like a top sergeant just to reorganize the group, which was spread over one complete floor and up the stairs. Ghod knows what we missed (the umpire implied there was plenty), but it didn't last. In the last room, the party actually panicked. Instigated by an NPC who broke into a run, yelling that we were doomed, the party bolted, leaving the leader behind calling for them to regroup. I followed at a reasonable pace, alone, to find the party surrendering to the Orcs. I wish I could cause the same reactions in the games I run, but the atmosphere and my inability to speak in three voices simultaneously are restrictions. It was interesting.

I will now discuss what I consider problems or deficiencies in Treasure Trap. Whether being limited to playing yourself is a disadvantage, I will leave for future discussions.

There is no doubt that TT is expensive. Joining for one year with the first run cost £46 (approx. \$70), with an additional £3 or more per adventure. Since I observed that players went through several adventures over the weekend, this can add up rapidly. No one appeared to feel cheated, however. And while many players winced, most joined at that time so as to continue. (The company does make special arrangements for visitors and will allow some runs by those who pay the basic fee; this is also the reason for the three year membership.)

Each adventurer is accompanied by an umpire to keep track of HP (you do not know how many you have), make the spells work (e.g. turn on the lights for a Light spell), inform you of what is happening to you ("you're unconscious") and describe what you see ("that depression is a pit," "that door isn't there," "ignore that demon" [wrong cue]). After each combat, he checks each individual for wounds and informs him of his status: wounded, unconscious or dead. However, since this isn't determined until the end of the combat, we have the interesting sight of dead and unconscious fighters battling on. This leads to a curious strategy whereby a player who knows himself to be mortally hit can fight without fear.

We now get to a Problem Area: SAFETY. The SCA would not recognize the style of fighting. To be a good fighter in this system, you must be able to deliver a large number of LIGHT blows. Not only is no more damage done by a solid blow but they are actively discouraged. And while many players put as much work into their costumes as SCAers, it is purely cosmetic. All damage and protection is determined by the game system.

In fact, there seem to be no equipment standards. Helmets range from plastic Viking helms purchased at a toy store to accurate reproductions of English Civil War helmets. Swords range from plastic to spring steel. Some armor is no more than cardboard with aluminum foil. There is no consistent rule on padding of weapons and armor; no requirement for eye protection; and bows are occasionally used.

Anyone familiar with the stringent requirements of such groups as the SCA would be shocked at the attitude displayed. To compound the problem, there is no requirement for a waiver nor is anyone connected with the group aware if they have insurance. I am not conversant with British law, but in the States this could be catastrophic. Particularly with the large number of minors.

In summary, I found both the set up and execution very good and strongly recommend it. However, I am greatly concerned with the apparent lackadaisical approach to safety. For further information, you can contact Fantasy Experience (Wargames) Ltd., PO Box 130, Chester, UK; Phone (Bunbury (0829) 260876. I have a small number of their brochures I will provide for a SASE.

Now for my wife's submission. This is the first she has written for general reading.

The six of you huddle by the light of a flickering candle. In front of you is a wooden door. You can hear movement and smell wood smoke on the far side. Do you open it? Who goes first?

That's easy; your character faces worse every week. With dice in hand, and a Coke by your elbow, no monster is too tough for you.

Not this time. It's real, and it's you.

The candle light and smoke and treasure or monster on the other side of the door are real. Especially the monsters! (How did that 5'3" case of walking acne that you just saw in the Inn suddenly become such a terrifying creature?)

When YOUR body is attacked by mace-wielding Orcs, will you charge in swinging or: run?

How well can you search a dungeon by the light of two candles for six people?

If you want to find out, go to Croseing in England. There a 19th century imitation castle is inhabited by ogres, undead, wizards and intrepid warriors.

The Treasure Trap is a live, role-playing game run in Pickforton Castle year round. For ten pounds you can take the basic adventure. If you like stumbling through unlit, winding corridors searching for treasure while battling monsters, a year's membership is only an additional 36 pounds. For additional fees, you can roleplay in decidedly different style. Or monster for free.

You can bring a sleeping bag and stay at the castle for one pound. If you prefer a bed, there are serviceable B&Bs around for quite reasonable price. The weaker sex (HA!) is welcome, whether with a guy or on your own. In a dark dungeon with orcs attacking, you find out fast that a sword has no sex.

When you go, DON'T: take equipment; they will provide it.

wear good clothes. The monsters have dye to mark wounds.

It should wash out, but....

Wear shoes that slip. That stone is hard as you will find.

DO: Take garb, if only a tunic of bath towels. Somehow you feel more adventurous than in your old jeans. A burlap tunic is provided.

Take a lunch and snacks. You will find yourself spending hours in the "tavern" talking to other players and preparing yourself for the upcoming adventure. If you want cold drinks, take those also. When I was there, they had snacks and coffee for sale. In the evening, they had hot snacks and sandwiches.

In this swordswoman's opinion, the Treasure Trap is the best buy for your time and money the FRP gamer will find.

~~~~~

THE ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE--continued by Peter A. Clarke

3) Finally, I suspect that the above point concerning the number of people who might play at any one time, coupled with the chance that the events will take place over a longer time-scale, will make such games more suitable for PBM than for normal face-to-face gaming. Of course, there might be occasional situations in which the events started to move more rapidly, but I don't think this would be common.

I wouldn't be surprised if people disagreed with all this and would welcome any suggestions which would make the kind of situations Lee mentioned possible to game during a "normal session" (i.e. 4+ players with one PC each for preference, all involved most of the time).

Well, time is getting on, and so I'll finish up for now. All in all, I thought #99 was a pretty good issue, so I hope that #100 manages to keep up the standard. Happy Christmas/New Year or whatever seems appropriate when you happen to be reading this.

## I CHING YOU CLAUDIUS 42

or" Just what the heck is going on around here?" (Horror film cliché no. 237)

Right, this is probably heading for 102, but could conceivably appear before 32. Happy New Year everyone anyway. (Incidentally I am still Harry Robertson of 193 Bruntsfield Place, Edinburgh, EH10 4DQ, Scotland. TEL-(031) 229 4682. From USA -011 44 31 229 4682). So much for that. To business...

MASTERS:(99); As I was saying (if 32 hasn't appeared, will be saying). To do Traveller magic you need to figure out the background and society of the would-be mage. i.e. Will it be: 1) A "Medaeval" society with no space travel/aliens (Trav. as FRP). 2) Med. style planet within "THE EMPIRE" or whatever i.e. with a spaceport and very strict laws concerning import of higher-tech equipment. 3) The empire knows about it and is doing a covert survey or similar excuse to get high-tech people roaming about confronting the mage with their superior "magic". 4) The planet is "up-to-date" & magic is scoffed at "It's just a trick." Magic here is very weak and training is difficult to impossible to find. Possibly a set-up along the lines of the Psionics Institute. 5) Magic is tolerated but comparatively weak. No "Levitate Space Ship" but the infamous "Create Hovel" may just work. 6) Modern-age and powerful "Levitate Space Ship" is possible. Each of these backgrounds will affect magic acquisition and use differently. Priests, to use your categories, will probably be fairly universal whereas Necromancers will almost always have a hard time of it.

JAMES: The planetary generation system looks very impressive. A few times I've thought "But what about..." reread it carefully and found it. // Reindeer can hold their breath for about ten minutes so thats all right.

LONG: yr ct to LEE: What worries me is not "Attack of the giant rutabaga" fans who think it's "Sci-Fi" but "Star Wars" fans who think it's Science Fiction.

LARTER: The tesseract dungeon sounds really impressive. It's almost worth falling off a wall for the sight of an orc approaching along the ceiling. // Secretaries look kind of interesting too.

ERIC MOLTE: Welcome and congrats on a very promising start. If you want I'll get a guest contrib from my sister's cat. (Cries of "It couldn't do worse than you") Oh the trials of fame...

Well that was fun wasn't it? What next? Ah yess... Step right this way... In 92 Simon Cornelius tried to define the various forms of "Fantasy Fiction" and to relate things to gaming from this. At the risk of seeking sponsorship from OTW productions I would like to disagree. First off Simon has problems defining the term "Science Fantasy". I would like to define it as "Basically Fantasy fiction but with an overlay of Science Fiction". Fairly useless I know but the best I can do is to refer you to no. 3) in my comment to Phil Masters above and to, amongst others, Christopher Stasheff's "The Warlock In Spite Of Himself". What he defines as Science Fantasy I would call "rubbish" which is not so damning as it sounds, since there is "good rubbish", i.e. fun to read but scientifically impossible. Simon goes on to say that it is rare for an author to write about totally non-human races. To my mind this is not just rare but impossible since no matter how hard one tries it is impossible to rid oneself of one's human perceptions. Simon then states that there are few campaigns based on what he calls "science fantasy" and which from here on in I shall call "rubbish" and mentions only Space Opera as rules for this type of gaming. The various "Star Trek" based rules are perfect examples of this type since for that I like the programme it is wildly unbelievable.

Having said that I find myself agreeing with Simon in his conclusions that despite all that campaigns should be as scientific as possible. I feel better now so let's go and do something else...

## THE REALMS OF FAERIE

This is based upon; "Kingdoms of Elfin" by Sylvia Townsend Warner, "Abbey Lubbers, Banshees and Boggarts" by Katherine Briggs and upon my own imagination and what I remember of the stories my grandmother (daughter of a seventh son of a seventh son) (honest) used to tell me.

The first thing to make clear is that fairies are not the six-inch high "I'll grant you three wishes" little old ladies that Mr. Disney made his fortune on. Basically the world of fairies can be split 4 ways: "seelie" and "unseelie" ("good" and "evil" are the closest approximations, but fairies have their own standards on these matters) and between solitary fairies who are, well, solitary and "trooping" fairies who live in "courts" or palaces beneath hills, presided over by, usually, a queen, rarely a king since the fairy courts tend toward matriarchy.

They range in height from about 3ft. 6in. to about 5ft tall and in colour from North-European type white to a delicate pale-green. There are, as far as I am aware, no black fairies (The "fairy" Black Peter who accompanies Santa Claus in the Netherlands, bundling bad children into his sack and carrying them off to Spain, is actually a folk-memory of the Spanish moors who used to rule the Netherlands). Fairies are, like ghosts, not immortal but have a life-span of about a thousand years.

They originated in Persia but are now extinct there. Instead their realms are now largely between Scandinavia, where they tend to be pretty vicious turning eventually into trolls, North-Western Russia, Germany, Belgium & The Netherlands, Northern France and the British Isles, although there are isolated ones and small groups in Turkey (Warner's "The Blameless Triangle") and the, then, Dutch East Indies.

Only solitary fairies now have much contact with the human race, since the trooping ones are more concerned with their own intrigues at court to be much bothered with the affairs of humankind except to go out to take changelings.

Other major differences between trooping fairies and solitary ones concern the powers of flight and invisibility. Put simply, all trooping fairies have both powers but the aristocrats consider it incredibly vulgar to fly and most do not throughout their entire lives. Servants, however, have to fly if their jobs are to be done and consider it completely natural. According to their type solitary fairies either can or cannot fly. Most are earthbound.

Invisibility to humans (but not to each other or, awkwardly, to some animals, eg dogs) is also innate to all trooping fairies, but they do have the ability to make themselves visible to mortals at will, and can sometimes be seen while they are asleep or drunk. They will only under exceptionable circumstances make themselves visible voluntarily.

Solitary fairies, on the other hand, can be invisible permanently (like the clap-cans), visible permanently, such as the various hobs, yet others can be seen only under exceptional conditions (eg buttery spirits), while still a few more seem to be visible or invisible at will (the knockers, for example).

As I have already mentioned, the solitary fairies in Scandinavia and Germany tend toward viciousness, whereas those in Scotland, Cornwall and Wales are more often kind and even generous towards people they like (though don't cross them but gifts, especially of clothing, may well result in the fairy leaving the family or person it has adapted. However there are exceptions such as the Red-cap who inhabit the Border country between Scotland and England and are just plain vicious.

Irish fairies, as you may have gathered from the legends of the leprechaun are mostly mischievous rather than vindictive, with no real sense of malice behind their constant annoying little tricks.

Brittany has very few solitary fairies but it does house the greatest of all the fairy kingdoms, Broceliande, with its cat-racing, outings to see shipwrecks and its Royal Pack of Werewolves with which the court can be seen hunting across the countryside on moonlit nights. It is a sight that is once seen and definitely never forgotten, mostly because the viewer will never get the chance to forget, since if you have seen the pack you can be absolutely certain that the pack's seen you.

Enough. Next a review. Stay tuned for more information...

A REVIEW: VICTORIAN ADVENTURE

I bought this at Games Day (on which only a bit more later). Victorian Adventure is described as "the first 'Truly British' role-playing game", is designed by Stephen K. Smith and is available from S.K.S. Distribution, 79 Hainton Avenue, Grimsby, South Humberside, England price £3.50(+p&p?)

Physically it is a 48-page, stapled booklet with thickish card covers, slightly larger than A4.

On opening the thing one is met by a table of contents and there is also an index and a fair bit of poor to bloody awful artwork scattered thruout.

The layout is logical, starting with character creation: physical strength, mental and spiritual strengths, agility, health/physique, wit/charm, countenance, & education are all rolled on 2d10 and these stats are then used to work out HP skill points, etc. Generation carries on thru: height/weight, class, occupation, etc. with a fair bit of player choice (always nice) to skill allocation (on a %age system) with a reasonable number of example skills rather than a comprehensive list provided.

The rules carry on with: combat (hand-to-hand and projectile), movement, spiritualism (very fashionable in Victorian Britain), hints on playing the game, a diary of events between 1817 & 1901 and a list of inventions and their dates (a la CoC) & relevant price-lists. The final two sections cover NPC creation, including such exotics as cowboys and acrobats, and the booklet finishes with 3 scenarios. Finally, on the back cover, are lists of the most used tables.

The combat system and character generation are both good and seem clean. The experience system is very elegant, allowing easy skill increases up to the 50% level and making things a bit more difficult after that. (It's not just an RQ).

Unfortunately, however, the spiritualism/seance section is somewhat confused, confusing and, as far as I can tell, useless. With careful reading it is possible to make some sense of it but it remains rather pointless, to my mind.

The game-hints fill out a page or so harmlessly enough but the 1817-1901 time-line and invention dates are a little gem. Well-researched and useful not only to this game but also, as Nick Larter pointed out, as a CoC sourcebook for the 19th Century. The NPC and horror monster creation systems are nicely done also, but I'd have appreciated some ideas on creating the natural beasties that my players will doubtless meet, such as watch-dogs and sewer-rats. Finally, the scenarios. I played the first one at Games Day and jollu good fun it was too. The other two, on reading thru them, seem to be equally as interesting.

To sum up: for a first attempt (as it is) this is quite impressive. For experienced players looking for something different it comes recommended (it comes Cheap, too). There are some omissions and weird bits, and, as with most games, the artwork is not good, but all in all its good value and a decent game.

Briefly to Games Day...

NICK LARTER: It's lovely to know that there's a fellow Pookies fan out there.

Next: the days themselves were excellent fun; or at least the time spent meeting everyone in the bar was. The show seemed very well organised but the vast numbers of spotty blond 12-year olds in Saxon t-shirts put me off a bit. I didn't do as much gaming as I'd meant to but conversations with a couple of the referees convinced me that I hadn't missed a great deal as it seemed to be of a uniformly poor nature. I did spend a lot of time at the chariot-racing and actually found myself running it at one point (Did you ever find it, Alison?) That, and a game of VA, was the sole extent of my participation but never mind, it was fun and then next year...

Well, that about wraps it up for this. Hi to everyone the brylcreem boy and I met at Games Day, see you next year (not if you see me first. Yes I can hear you from here.) Till then...

Ok, you can go now. Last one out, turn off the lights...

An ancient ritual found on shattered pieces of pottery and carefully patched together by a little old archaeologist and then translated by 700 Jesuit priests in a monastery by the Black Sea. This valuable work was on loan to the National Museum when it was stolen by Jenny Mein of 10/72 George Street, Norwood, 5067, South Australia, and sent to a FRP Fanzine and passed off as her original work. The criminal was sentenced to work indefinitely as a public servant, a fate she vehemently denounces as being unfair punishment for her crimes! (Yes, I know it's silly, but this is 100 and I had to do something different.)

### RELATED COMMENT ON AGE 96

I've had a few comments on Rob's voice table and I think it needs further explanation. It is almost exclusively a range not type or quality table. How good a singer your Bard is must be determined by your own system, whether a singing skill, a BVC stat or a percentile roll. Type of voice is included to a certain extent but does not cover gravelly voices like Bob Dylan's or any other.. Let your character work out the fine details. Rob says he specifically designed the tables with Medaeval types in mind. If your world has Rock bands, it probably won't work.

### JOURNEY OF A SORCEROR

Somewhere in this zine is a short story of mine. I thought some of you would like to know where my ideas came from. (I love reading this sort of thing. If you don't, then skip to the next bit.)

The character of Colm came from another, less successful story. His personality was expanded after I saw "Star Wars" and I imagine him as a very young Ben Kenobi. The Kalgin was based on a picture of a Chinese Lion (Chi-lin) and is reincarnated in various forms in all of my stories. This was its first appearance. The title is taken from an instrumental piece of the same name by the "Eagles". I love the tune and it started me wondering just what sort of journey a sorcerer would make. Several hours of listening later I had the idea. The music is better known as the theme of "A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" which I hadn't heard of at that stage. I had also never heard of D&D, although the story was completed after my 'initiation'. Be warned, Colm appears in other stories of mine and may be enticed back to these pages at the slightest encouragement.

STOP PRESS: I've just got no. 99 (and Chris has phoned Lee - no, there wasn't another Telecom strike.) and heard that 100 is full. This means this is actually 102. Sorry. Really. This also means that you got part 1 of "Shadow Game". lastish.. See, I didn't even get encouragement and Colm appeared again. Part two has been deferred until nextish. One third coup, eh? Not bad, not bad. The Britts failed too. (Heh! Heh!)

### DUNGEONQUEST 2

It started innocently enough. While browsing through a gaming shop Jenny found the paper. It was the displacer beast symbol that caught her eye. Carefully she folded it up, hid it in her bag and hurried home to examine her prize.

Breathlessly she realized what she had discovered - a clue to the Adelaide wargaming con! Quickly she wrote away to the Guild (South Australian Historical Wargaming Society) and then armed only with \$27 (the entrance fees for 6 student and non-student competitors) she braved to dim, dark reaches of their office, which was cleverly disguised as a disused insurance office, to stake her claim.

Gathering a bunch of trusty allies (Chris Murray, John Abrahamson, Hugh Bilizer, Craig MacLeod and Robin Elliott) she climbed the stairs early on Saturday 8th October to find the con. They fought their way through untold munchkins, ignoring the lures of Traveller, 15mm battles and Melec (which none of us had played enough to compete in), they found their first GM, René.

Suddenly they found themselves magically changed into Atlanteans, searching the plane of Dreams for the Table of Law. René turned out to be an excellent GM and they had great fun, even if they didn't finish the quest and without the roleplaying. Overall they did very well that session.

They couldn't stay for the night's entertainment ('Dragonslayer') but flush with

excitement Chris and Jenny ventured forth the following day in search of adventure. They found none. That is, until later in the afternoon when they found the mysterious MUDDA. (Melbourne University D&D Association). Apparently they hold conferences on Melbourne every year and Rhys Howitt offered to run Jenny, Chris and Jeremy Close (who we found at the con, equally dejected at the Munchkins) through their tournament game. Quickly they agreed and were swiftly transformed into the wierdest set of characters I have ever seen (bar Neil's). As there were supposed to be 6 PCs they became schizos. They escaped from prison (a real dungeon!!!) where they (they being the executive crew of the Silverwraith Lady - a ship that flies through the air) were being held for bombing the wrong town and followed various clues to the rich lych-witch Loui's treasure.

Memorable moments were when someone shot a crossbow bolt at a monster, to have it retort (via Rhys) "I can get by with a crossbow bolt - It's only 2-5 points!" Later on Chris was heard to refuse a task, saying "I don't want to die." Jeremy quickly parried with "Well, isn't that a bit selfish?"

On the Monaaay (a holiday) and last day of the con, the original trusty allies (with Robin replaced by Peter Hein), found themselves pitched overboard and in an underwater adventure to find a golden spire. They blew it badly, missing the vital secret door (partly their fault for not specifying they were searching everywhere and partly the GM's fault, an Ian this time, for not telling them that when they searched the room they did not search behind the Zombie.)

They hold the record for taking the longest in-character time to go through the senario - 4 days climbing to the top of the mountain over rooftops, where they found a bag of waterbreathing potions and a DM hint.

Back to the Zombie room, where John asked the delightful question, "Does anyone speak Zombie?" After finding that secret door they sallied on and landed in a room with two creatures. One said, "You must make a statement. If you say the truth I will take you to my master." The other added, "If you say a lie I will take you to mine." They exuded evil.

The intreoid adventurers paused only to say, "Knickers!" and then were off again, running out of time soon afterwards.

General comments on the con: Any assumption that this con was organized was completely unfounded in fact. The programme came out on the Saturday morning, and events frequently started after or before time (usually before, which is more annoying) or not at all. We got one page of competition rules (founded by accident) after the first session. All in all it was fun, but nothing to try and get out here for. Rumours are that I may get to the Canberra con in January...

COMMENTS A&E 97 (At last, just for John..)

J. BURT: (Thought I'd forgotten you eh?) No, Orange people aren't Hare Krishnas, they're Ananda Margas. Are they the same as Rajneeshes? Ours don't make nuisances of themselves in airports, they're not allowed to. We've also banned them from asking for 'donations for flowers' in the streets. All they can do is hand out books and accost people to talk to them. (Hare Krishnas that is) (This is all re me) Oz is Aussie slang for Australia. Sorry, misunderstood your references. I have too much trouble with people thinking Australia is the size of a matchbox. //Sorry, an affair with Scot Fritz is out of the question. By the time you read this, I'll be a respectably engaged person. //General note: Your racial stereotypes table should give +X% to Aussies in sailing... // (re voice tables) There is definately an overlap in range between Contralto and Tenor. There is an overlap between most voices. Some (not many) women have lower voices than some men.

COMMENTS A&E 99 (The non-British-take-over-issue)

S. FRITZ: (re PBZ) Do you feel you have bitten off more than you can chew? When will the next turn come? // See ct to BURT above. Sorry. Respectably engaged females don't have affairs with strange men (even if they are a long way away). If you bring Dennis into the PBZ and kill him off you will still have him in the real world. If you try to dispose of him in the real world I will be very upset. Besides, he'd still be with me in P. DASILVA's world...

Q.LONG: Welcome back.//(re me) The official reply (from Rob) is that he'll let you be a Profundo bass. Though if you had training you would probably find that your upper range would extend (and if you have had training you already know the answer.) //You should have received a copy of the article by now. If you haven't then wrote. Writing to me is a sure way of getting things. I always answer letters but not necessarily notes to me in A&E. My reply went in months ago. It wasn't printed but several other even better ones were.

R.SAUNDERS: Unfortunately your zine is becoming more & more illegible. Why don't you just type it like the rest of the plebs? You wouldn't have to pay much more and think of all the extra comments you'd get when we could actually see it!//(re my call to Lee) Actually she sounds much taller on the phone. She seemed to be a lovely lady, but then again, she could be a nasty, horrible monster and just be fooling us. (But I doubt it.)//Write to me if you really want the birth defects stuff. I haven't finished the tables yet (this gives me a few more months to work on it) but it is purely for fantasy, I got bits & pieces from everywhere and added a few unusual ones myself. For purely interest's sake it isn't worth much.

WIZZARDS AND WARRIORS: This delightful show has now made it to little old Adelaide. Neil and I watched the first episode last night and killed ourselves laughing. How anyone could take it seriously I fail to imagine. Any film with the lines "Animal communication is a gift, my uncle gave it to me. I'll be waiting down by my unicorn." can't be anything but a comedy. I thought it was great! Was 'the Rescue' the first episode, or have they diddled us out of the beginning?

I'm putting off the heavy stuff until nextish. After lastish's effort I'm feeling a little poor and out-of-ideas. (Hmm. Part 2 of Life Begins at Death, concluding episode of "Shadow Game", more of the Colgar saga, what am I talking about?) The Colgar Chronicles have now officially ended. Emith is saved and Gwynne is going to retire (to Dennis's great relief!). I also rolled up my first superhero and Neil wouldn't let me have stretching with no range or a Villain bonus for being an ex-villain. Just wait till Nightstalker (a mutant cat/human/reporter) gets him. There's also this great idea for a strongman called Harvey Wallbanger that I'm going to try and put over him...

Hmm. 30 lines to go. I used up all my fillers in 101, but I still have some of Jenny Goldfinch's poems left, so you should see some from time to time when I run out of ideas. (Like now)

#### TAKING WING TO CROSS THE NEW HORIZON

Taking wing to cross the new horizon,  
Each man tries to gain  
The goal upon the mountaintop,  
From the deep and lonely plain.

Taking wing to cross the new horizon,  
Each man outstretches  
Tis arm to grasp the passing air  
In tribute to a memory.

Taking wing to cross a new horizon,  
Each man in writing  
His fate across the darkening page  
Stirs a tragic reminder.

Taking wing to cross the new horizon,  
Each man comes to pass  
Through the world he has seen, into  
The unknown haze of his death.

And before I go, for those brave GIs that allow forecasting spells: Fiedler's forecasting rules: 1) It is very difficult to forecast, especially about the future. 2) He who lives by the crystal ball soon learns to eat ground glass. 3) The moment you forecast you know you are going to be wrong - you just don't know in which direction. 4) If you're ever right, don't let them forget it! Wes thu ha!

## Review of SUPERWORLD

by Richard J. Schwall  
2008 Wheelwright Lane  
Newbury Park, CA 91320

Electrostencil by Barry Gold  
with my sincere thanks!

Superworld (by Steve Perrin, with 10 other contributors who get box-cover billing) is Chaosium's new superhero role-playing game. It should not be confused with the small 16-page rule book (of the same name!) which was part of Worlds of Wonder. It is available at most hobby stores, or from Chaosium Inc., Box 6302, Albany, CA, 94706-0302. Add \$2 for handling and California residents add sales tax.

For \$16 you get 3 staple-bound rule books totalling 112 (8.5 by 11 inch) pages, double column. There is some internal artwork that is mostly not used to clarify the text. You also get an 8-page booklet of reference tables (some of which are not in the rule books), 4 different character sheets, 3 different GM sheets, a page of white-on-black character cutouts, and dice (2D20, 1D8, and 3D6).

Comparisons with Champions are inevitable. Even Steve Perrin admitted in Different Worlds #23 that, "...Champions [is] the leader in superhero games, and the mark all others will have to match". He has marginally succeeded in matching that mark. Superworld has a more complete coverage of super powers than Champions and its supplement Champions II together. However, the coverage of the comic book environment is weaker. Most conspicuously missing is any discussion of vehicles and headquarters.

The "Superheroes Book" includes a brief introduction, and then moves into superhero creation. Players freely choose a secret identity and origin for each hero. The profession selected for the secret identity will influence the PC's income and allowed "prior experience" skills. Each PC then rolls 2D6+6 for each of 7 characteristics (the ones from BRP, Runequest, etc.). There is a provision for re-rolling some of the characteristics if the total is below 91. The characteristic total divided by 7 is the points available to buy prior experience skills. The total of characteristics is the number of hero points available to buy powers and skills. Therefore, a PC that has gotten lucky in die rolls will do well in all categories, making things a bit less balanced than in Champions.

Buying powers is based on a system that is very similar to that in Champions. There are basic powers that are modified by advantages and disadvantages to adjust the capabilities and cost. A hero can acquire more hero points by taking on handicaps that will inconvenience him during the campaign. The usual peril of "minimaxing" is here, but the book warns against making any individual character too powerful, and recommends that experienced players design their heroes by concept rather than concentrating on points.

PCs grow in power as the campaign progresses. Characteristics and skill percentages can be increased, and additional hero points can be gained. These are all based on die rolls, not on victorious conflict nor on skillful role playing.

The Game Mechanics section is very heavily combat oriented. It covers time scales (different powers have different times to execute), delayed actions, 2 action resolution mechanisms (skill rolls (with criticals, specials and fumbles) and resistance rolls), boosting (extreme exertion, with a chance to temporarily burn out the power), lifting & throwing, various damage causes, results of damage (damage beyond available hit points is "permanent" (heals slower) and can lead to death), recovery, and breaking things.

The combat section covers movement (very superficially), attack types, results of critical hits and fumbles, weapons lists, a few special attacks (including a sort of demoralization attack), circumstance modifiers, parrying, and knockback.

The book ends with a glossary, which was not listed in the table of contents, so the reader tends to find it after he really needs it.

The power list in the "Superpowers Book" is a bit better than in Champions. The totally dreadful multipower and elemental control are gone, and are replaced by a better "exclusive powers" disadvantage. More powers are listed, covering some of the conspicuous holes in Champions, such as shapeshifters, astral projectors, and gravity projectors. However, a few known powers got left out, such as microscopic vision, escape artistry, and security systems skills. Fortunately, the power prices of the two games are sufficiently well matched that powers can be transferred over. Often, the powers are a bit more broken into components (potency, range, radius, chance of success) than in Champions.

The "Gamemasters Book" discusses controlling PC motivations, overriding death, complicating the PCs' lives, retirement, campaign management, income and expenses, supervillain creation and traits, bystanders and henchmen. Some model hero and villain organizations are provided. Law is discussed, including 2 probation schemes that may allow a hero to continue to operate after being convicted. There is a 2.5 page listing of crimes and penalties. Characteristics and powers of 11 real-world animals are given. 14 pages of the GM book are devoted to a single-session and a multi-session scenario.

The books have several proofreading failures that result in the examples presented disagreeing with the the written rules. Generally I find that the examples provide better guidance where conflicts exist. Some internal contradictions are not so easily resolved, such as the 2 different rules on the same page for recovery from sleep gas. I have some strong disagreements with some of their listed costs (such as Strength costing 1/3 each while Appearance costs 2) and powers (Transmute allows changing the shape or chemical composition of inanimate objects - guess what the players will do!)

Regardless of these flaws, I recommend Superworld to all those who are interested in the superhero genre. I also recommend it to those who may have an interest in play balancing characters, powers, or weapons in other role-playing or conflict games. There is a wealth of useful guidance here.

SAPRISTI NOCKOS! #10

another goonzine of forgotten magnitude and indeterminate frequency by Peter da Silva the Mad Australian, of 9950 Club Creek Dr. #602, Houston, TX 77036; (713) 776-3984.

## 1. Morals and Ethics

Some definitions for your amusement: morals and ethics. Ethics are rules that can be derived from game theory (enlightened self-interest, etc.). Morals are those that cannot. This makes ethics a stronger set than morals, and makes morals unethical. A useful distinction, and it's directly applicable to the Moral Majority.

## 2. Adventures In Estarcion

One "Weedhopper," an accomplished martial artist, has acquired a shield of some power. It can be thrown like Captain America's and always returns to his hand. It also only does Fatigue damage (aka subdual damage). Deciding that he had a neat oversized shuriken, he has taken the name Captain Estarcion and devoted his life to righting wrongs and making lots of money.

Pylorus Picklegut, an ex-pirate mage, was trying to cast a 7m fire spell in a 1m area, to increase his damage. Unfortunately his target was an old car which had been powered by some sort of Elemental. As he was the nearest vessel it could find, the Elemental transferred to his body, giving him the power of cold-fire. He has taken the name of Black Torch.

Don Bwake, a new member of the party, is convinced he is an avatar of "Soar, the god of Sunder." Due to a speech impediment, this comes out as "Thoar, the god of Thunder." His +5/9 point returning dingus (thank you, Alan Brain) has added to his delusion.

Caldwell Pflock is a young mage with a ring of impeccable clothing. He has also fallen victim to the superhero bug and is now referred to as the W.A.S.P.

Also present were a number of other crazies, including a mage by the name of Placebo who has a serious problem with schizophrenia.

When Pylorus blasted the car, he not only became transformed into the Black Torch but also became guilty of arson. In addition, the vacant lot where the car had been standing had--just the night before--been the site of "Norton College" (actually a facsimile that a pair of mages/conmen had been using). He also created a half-mile tower of ice in the middle of town.

When word got out, Lord Gorce himself came down to investigate, along with 20 Palnan crossbowmen. Placebo, thinking quickly, cast a series of spells while Gorce was accusing our "heroes" of arson, theft and high treason. First he cast unnoticed ability on himself, while casting an illusion of himself; then he cast an illusion of the Moon Roach on Lord Gorce.

The W.A.S.P. was not idle meanwhile. With the sound "wubba wubba wubba \*poit\*", he cast an invisibility spell on himself. Unfortunately he was caught before the spell was complete. "Seize them!" "I don't see this one, boss."

The illusion of the Roach drowned out most of Gorce's commands with such sayings as "The weeds of Bureaucracy bear bitter fruit" and covered up the rest with "Shut up, Kevitch; shut up, Gorce!" This attracted the attentions of his Kitchen Staff, Supervisor Raviv the Black. Raviv had already killed one Moon Roach and wasn't about to let this one get away either. He cast two daggers which hit the Roach (actually Gorce) in the chest and neck.

The body of Lord Gorce slowly tumbled out the back of the illusion, as Raviv pulled his secret Hsiffy disappearing trick. Placebo then made the illusion grow wings and a halo and slowly rise into the air, where it disappeared with a faint \*poit\*.

The Black Torch's tower of ice began to fall, threatening many valuable taxpayers and bureaucrats. The general chaos reached critical mass at this point, and the party was able to make good their escape.

### 3. COMMENTS

#### 3.1 Biased Opinions #99

MIKE LEWIS (re ct to LEE GOLD): Education does not equal learning. People can have all the pieces of paper in the world and still be incompetent. And the opposite is also true, of course.//As for play balance, any rules are automatically play-balanced if they are applied uniformly. Well, almost any.// (re ct to me): Oh wow, what an idea! No, it's more along the lines of boot-to--tradesman and then act like a conservative tradesman who sells property so as to properly develop other places. Straightlaced would fit as well...mutter, mumble....//Computers are definitely capable of independent thought already. That's what security systems and user friendly interfaces are for. You know: "I wouldn't do that if I were you." Then you come to AI systems like Phran and expert systems like MYCIN which are definitely capable of dealing with ambiguous input. Ambiguities require independent thought to resolve. I was once told by an AI person that "the computer language of the '90s would be English." Nonsense! Any computer capable of dealing with English is not being "programmed." Such an entity is a colleague, not a tool.

QUENTIN LONG: Of course, you realize that the very criterion you choose to point out science's advantages has thrown you into a strange loop. Science is a faith which happens to produce reliable results and so on. The only problem is that the reliable results and so on are part of the Scientific Method itself. You cannot justify a faith by applying its axioms to itself. That gets you into strange stuff. Like Godel's theorem and Zen Buddhism. Not attacking science here, mind; it's my own religion after all.//The Astral Projection power also has the disadvantages of leaving your body behind, unattended and vulnerable. At least classical OOE-type Astral Projection does.//I am currently playing a TFT mage in CHAMPIONS but can't tell you anything about how; the GM did it, and I never bothered to check my character sheet, which is currently in Berkeley.//Pronounce "Sci-Fi" /skiffy/ and take 60 EP in Bad Pun for that story.

DAVE NALLE: (cc: DANIEL NOLTE): TFT is probably the closest approximation so far to the expert game system Dan suggests. It is extremely flexible if you look at it as a kernel on which to build, like FORTH. FORTH by itself (with no additional hacking) is very limited and not very flexible or comprehensive. That's its strength and why there are so many FORTH fanatics out there. TFT is not very use-friendly. All it really is is, as I said before, a framework on which to build a world. The mechanics are much less world-dependent than most (if not all other commercially available games)...As for yr ct to JASON ZALK: who uses published scenarios except beginners, and I have already admitted that TFT is no good for them? My world has definitely not overemphasized tactics, but then I am not unskilled as a DM. Anyway, to wind this up: TFT (FORTH) is a very fast, clean and flexible system in the hands of a hacker like myself. If you prefer ADA or COBOL, well, best of luck to you.

DANIEL JAMES: Sap works out all right. At times, I have been known to use "Gentlethings," as in "Gentlethings, are you ready to start?" It is versatile if a little overly general. It also fails to specify sapience. So does "body" for that matter.//Of course, I'm trying to confuse you!//I wish you would capitalize or underline your comment headers rather than bold-facing them. It doesn't always come through.//Good planetary generation system.

F. M. DHOTY: Don't listen to them! Silly stuff like this always has a place. But what do I know; I'm only another crazy Aussie.



## REALISTIC ROLEPLAYING RULES (the 3R System)

There has been considerable discussion in A&E about new generations of FRP rules and what they should contain. I would like to present my concept of a rules set with maximum consistency with mundane reality. Everybody knows the obvious unrealities found in fiction, like the 30 lb battleaxe (most weigh 4-6 lbs) and some of the most obvious errors of game designers who had never tried anything they were writing about (like D&D's statement that greatswords require a 10' radius circle of clearance, when they are actually wielded like a cross between a spear and a poleaxe, requiring very little room). Too many rules run afoul of reality because they were written to be convenient for die rolling rather than physically meaningful. While the following is not a complete system, it does introduce methods by which such a system could be devised. (If anyone wishes to use it in creating an actual game for sale, let me know.)

The first and easiest step towards injecting reality into a rules set is to make sure that the weights and lengths of items and creatures are realistic. When you set up a list of items and their weights and sizes, either measure them directly or consult the available references to make sure you use the correct values. Swords are 3-5 lbs, not 30 and run 3-4' long, not 8'. If you want data on weight, size, and pulls of bows, call an archery shop (better yet, go there with a measuring tape). The Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. puts out tables giving optimum weights for height for normal adults. (The tables assume 2" heels for women and 1" heels for men.) Natural history books and animal guides can give you the size, weights, speeds, and other factors on most animals. There are a number of references available on the cost and availability and usage of common foods and items in the Dark Ages, Middle Ages, and Renaissance. Remember that most earlier societies did not use a lot of money. A thousand gold pieces was immense wealth. If you base your rules on Medieval Europe at the end of the Norman Conquest, you will have a society that looks and feels right because it is based on a real economy. Pay particular attention to the wages paid to craftsmen and the income derived from lands and trade.

Next, there is devising characters. The only sentient race available for checking is homo sapiens. Humans should be defined first realistically, and then the other races should be defined as variations of humanity. You will want to devise a world in which the game can take place. The easiest thing is to assume an alternate Earth, so all world parameters are the same. There are a number of books and articles (Poul Anderson wrote a good one) detailing how to construct an inhabitable world, starting with its sun and working down to its orbit, mass, radius, axial tilt, moons, atmosphere, oceans and continents. These determine gravity, maximum size of flying animals, weather, damage from falling, etc. For this article, I will assume an alternate Earth so all world parameters are the same as in our world. You will want to draw political and geological maps of your world or an area of it. You will want to include histories and political/economic information. Again, a good idea is to go back to some time in our history and adapt from there.

Once a player has chosen the character's race, nationality, and place and time of birth, it is time to define the characteristics of the character. Most adventures and fantasy stories involve characters who have passed the age of puberty and have reached their main growth, although they may gain in strength and height later. I will assume this is the case for this article and that I am dealing with adults in their prime. Children and elders can be defined as variations on adults.

First determine the character's sex, age, height, weight and personal appearance (e.g. color of skin and hair and eyes, shape of face, hands, limbs and torso, presence of facial hair and style of haircut). These are what is seen outwardly. There is a

good set of terminology devised for this used by the police and artists to describe people. Defining these will allow you to visualize and possibly draw the characters. Remember that every story begins with a description of the major characters. The rules should do this too by including these parameters.

Beauty is a subjective concept that is culturally dependent and goes through fads. Some rules try to give a numerical value to comeliness or appearance. There is no realistic way to do this, as a person's appearance score would be different for each person who looking at him. I advise that you just use some key words to describe the character, as is done in novels, and leave the rest to roleplaying rather than to mechanics. It is easier to deal with and more informative to say that a person is ruggedly good looking in a Nordic way, with shoulder-length, straight blond hair, blue eyes, shaven chin, 6' tall, 180 lbs, well muscled, unscarred, and a tanned Caucasian than to say he has a Comeliness of 14.

Height and Weight should be numerically specified. Rather than giving an abstract Size number that requires a table to explain, just give height and weight and indicate how athletically built or thin or fat a person is. This can be done by defining the person's Build (BLD) as well as the Height (HT) and Weight (WT). A person's shape can be determined by dividing the Build into Lean (LBLD) and Fat (FAT) and thus the weight into Lean Body Weight (LWT) and Excess Weight (EWT). The average American male adult has 18% body fat; the average American female adult has 25% body fat. Thus if an average man weighs 160 lbs, his LWT is 131 lbs and he is carrying an EWT of 29 lbs of fat. Let us define  $BLD = LBLD + (FAT/10)$ . (This gives us a better range for FAT.)

We would like to have a formula relating HT, BLD and WT. The obvious first try is something like  $WT = (BLD)(HT)^3$ , since the volume (and hence the weight at constant density) goes with the cube of the radius. I noticed that as people got taller, they also grew more slender, so BLD was inversely proportional to HT in people that were in shape. I therefore tried the formula  $WT = (BLD)(HT)^2$  and checked to see if it fit the MLIC height/weight tables; it fit very well. Let WT be in kilograms, and HT in meters. A 6' tall man weighing 180 lbs would be 1.829m tall and weigh 81.82 kg. He would have a BLD of 24.46. Since most games prefer characteristics to be in the 1-20 range, we add a factor of two and get  $WT = 2 \times BLD \times HT^2$ , which gives a BLD of 12.23.

I applied this formula to the MLIC height/weight tables, which have three columns for small, medium and large frames. The agreement was excellent with a standard deviation of about 1.5%. The BLDs for Women with small, medium and large frames were 10.24, 10.94 and 11.78 respectively, while Men had 10.73, 11.46, and 12.36. (I used the average weight in the weight range given.) There was a recent announcement that the MLIC tables are about 10% low in weight. Putting this in and rounding to the nearest half, gives 11, 12 and 13 for Women and 11.5, 12.5 and 13.5 for Men. Arnold Schwarzenegger was 6'2" tall and weighed 250 lbs when he won the Mr. Universe title, which gives him a BLD of 16.1. The heaviest man in history was Robert Hughes, who in 1958 was 6' tall and weighed 1069 lbs, for a BLD of 72.7, almost six times normal. The tallest man on record was Robert Wadlow, who was 8'11" and weighed 439 lbs, for a BLD of 13.5. The smallest man on record was Calvin Phillips, who in 1791 was 26.5" tall and weighed 12 lbs, for a BLD of 6. (The tallest woman was June Bunford at 7'7" and the tallest, non-pathological man was 7'9" tall.)

If you want to have a SIZE characteristic in the usual range, you can define  $SIZE = HT \times 10$ , which means SIZE is the height in decimeters. Then the range of 26.5" to 8'11" becomes a SIZE range of 6.73 to 27.20. The average American Man is 5'10" tall (1.778m or SIZE 17.78), while the average American Woman is 5'4" tall (1.626m or SIZE 16.26), a SIZE difference of about 1.5. If you wanted to use English units, SIZE would be HT in units of 4". A 6' tall man would be size 18. The range would then be SIZE 6.63-26.75, with average SIZE being 17.5 for Men and 16 for Women. The HT/WT formula in metric units with  $SIZE = HT$  in decimeters is  $WT = 2 \times BLD \times (SIZE/10)^2$ . With WT in lbs and SIZE in units of 4", the formula is  $WT = (4.54) \times BLD \times (SIZE/10)^2$ .

We could obtain a better average BLD and equation by setting  $WT = 5 \times BLD \times (SIZE/10)^2$ . Then the optimum BLDs for small, medium and large frames become 10 1/4, 11 and 11 3/4 respectively for Women and 10 3/4, 11 1/2 and 12 1/4 for Men, rounding to the nearest quarter.

Now consider that the average man has 18% body fat and the average woman 25% body fat. The optimum BLDs then, using the English unit results, would be 7.67, 8.2 and 8.83 for Women and 8.83, 9.39 and 10.13 for Men. The FAT scores would be 25.6, 27.3 and 29.4 for Women, and 19.4, 20.6 and 22.2 for Men. (Remember that  $BLD = LBLD + (FAT/10)$ .) With this system, you can simulate many things. If a character chooses to diet or is traveling on half-rations or is being ill-fed in captivity, then the FAT score can be reduced by one or more points per week. Fasting or total starvation could reduce FAT by up to one point a day. If the character does not exercise while losing weight, then he will also lose muscle mass as well as fat, pretty much on a one-to-one basis. (This is a fact long known to bodybuilders!) This would result in the LBLD decreasing by 0.1 for every 1 point loss in FAT. A character who is forced to bed rest to recover from disease or injury could have the debilitating effects simulated by the conversion of some LBLD into FAT, leaving the BLD the same. Conversely, a character in body training could lower FAT and raise LBLD. Most athletes have low body fat levels, around 5-10%, while bodybuilders can get down to only a few percent body fat. A character with a BLD of 12 and 5% body fat would have a LBLD of 11.4 and FAT of 6.

Now let us look at the internal characteristics. The first one most people consider, since it has the most effect in combat, is Strength (STR). Most game systems treat STR as an absolute quantity, reflecting the amount of weight you can pick up. Often the weight that can be picked up is a non-linear function of STR that requires a table to look up. A 100' Giant with STR 20 and a 5' man with STR 20 can both pick up the same weight. The problem comes when you consider magically expanded or shrunk creatures. If you want a Giant Ant to have the same relative STR to Size it had when small, so it can pick up large boulders when big, you will have to increase its STR when you enlarge it. I propose the use of a Relative STR system, with STR defined as the percentage of one's Lean Body Weight (LWT) one can pick up or carry. I use LWT because increasing muscle mass increases LBLD and hence LWT, because  $LWT = 5 \times LBLD \times (SIZE/10)^2$ . Putting on fat does not increase the amount of weight you can pick up. In fact, the extra fat acts as extra weight carried and thereby decreases the amount of weight you can carry besides your own weight.

With the existence of common cheap calculators and the spread of home computers, I do not feel obliged to avoid the use of equations that require a little math. RuneQuest and other games already divide the body up into Hit Locations, each with its own Hit Points. I would therefore propose that each location have its own STR value, corresponding to the arms, legs, stomach, chest/back and neck muscles. (You could even determine the amount of muscle in each location so as to calculate HP per location, and then divide LBLD into the Basic Frame (FRM) and total muscle mass (MSL) so that  $BLD = FRM + MSL + (FAT/10)$ .)

The legs are obviously stronger than the arms. They are longer and therefore have more leverage; they have larger bones and therefore can support more muscle mass; and they are used constantly in walking, and therefore will be usually more developed. I therefore propose that STR be in units of 10% of LWT liftable for each leg, and that for the other locations STR be in units of 5% of LWT liftable. This reflects the fact that world-class weightlifters can lift about twice as much with their legs as with their arms. An arm with STR 0 would be paralyzed. An arm with STR 1 could move a little but couldn't even lift its own weight. An arm with STR 20 could lift the person's LWT. (There is a female American weightlifter who can lift her own weight with one arm up over her head. She would thus have an arm STR of about 21, assuming she has 5% body fat.) A weightlifter with STR 24 in both legs could thus, using both legs, lift  $4.8 \times LWT$ , say in a deadlift. Since this includes the body's weight itself, the amount of external weight liftable would be  $3.32 \times WT$ , assuming 10% body fat.

Thus a weightlifter who weighed 250 lbs and had 10% body fat and STR 24 in each leg could deadlift 830 lbs, which is what world-class weightlifters of that weight are lifting these days.

To check out how this corresponds to reality, I examined the results of the 1983 listings for California Men and Women Weightlifting (May 25, 1983). I looked at the winning lift in each weight range for three events: bench press, deadlift and squat. The first uses only arm strength; it does not involve lifting the body as the body is lying flat on a bench. The other two involve leg strength and involve lifting the body as well as the weight. (Squat has the weight on the shoulders; deadlift has the weight lifted from the ground to waist level. The different relationships to the body's center of gravity result in different weights liftable in the two lifts. Since women have lower centers of mass than men, men generally can squat more than they can deadlift, while women deadlift more than they can squat. It is easier to lift a weight if it is close to your center of mass, which is why wearing a suit of armor is easier than carrying it in your arms.) (My wife is involved in weightlifting, and so I have looked into the subject.)

The ratio of weight lifted to body weight category was fairly constant in each of the lifts, indicating the weightlifters were all fairly even in relative STR, presumably all near maximum STR for humans. For men (114-242 lbs), the average ratios were: Benchpress  $2.38 \pm .11$ , Deadlift  $3.50 \pm .33$  and Squat  $3.49 \pm .46$ . For women (97-165 lbs), the average ratios were: Benchpress  $1.45 \pm .15$ , Deadlift  $3.83 \pm .17$ , and Squat  $2.42 \pm .19$ . Averaging the Squat and Deadlift and adding 1 because the body weight is being lifted also gives leg lifts an average ratio of 4.5 for men and 4.13 for women. This gives average leg STR of 22.5 for men and 20.7 for women. From the Benchpress ratios, we get average arm STR of 23.8 for men and 14.3 for women. This reflects the fact that men can develop greater upper body strength than women.

Most American women have rather weak arms. A woman weighing 120 lbs, with the normal 25% body fat (and hence LWT 90 lbs), who could just lift 36 lbs overhead with both arms, would have an arm STR of 4, ignoring the weight of the arms. Thus we see that the full range of 1-21 exists in arm STR for women, while in men the range increases to 1-24 or higher. We can simulate right-handedness easily by giving a person's right arm STR 12 and left STR 10 in place of average arm STR 11. We can use this system to simulate the debilitating effects of injury on a limb: let damage be subtracted from that limb's STR. Thus the force the limb can generate and the weight it can lift go down. If a leg drops below STR 12, it cannot support the body weight (assuming 17% body fat) and thus walking becomes difficult.

Consider a man weighing 180 lbs with 10% body fat, so LWT = 162 lbs. He has arm STR 16 and leg STR 20. He can lift 130 lbs with one arm, which means he can apply a force of 130 lbs with a weapon wielded by that arm. If he used a mace, whose head traversed an arc of 6' before hitting, it would have a kinetic energy of 780 ft-lbs when it hit. If we defined damage as 1 pt per 100 ft-lbs of kinetic energy, it would do 8 pts damage. If the arm were wearing 15 lbs of armor, then the force it could impart to the mace would be reduced to 115 lbs, yielding 690 ft-lbs or 7 pts damage. In this way, encumbrance of armor directly subtracts from damage done.

If his arm is hit for 6 pts damage, arm STR drops to 10 and the arm can now only produce a force of 81 lbs, reduced by the armor to 66 lbs, yielding a kinetic energy of 396 ft-lbs or 4 pts damage. If his arm took another 8 pts damage, it would be reduced to STR 2 and could only exert a force of 16 lbs, not even enough to lift the mace and armor, so the mace would be dropped from the nearly stunned arm.

If a leg were reduced to below STR 10, it could not support the body. If both legs were reduced to total STR of below 10, the person could not even stand. If one leg were at STR 10+ and a crutch was available to assist the other side, the person could walk with the aid of the crutch. Thus varying the STR of limbs in response to damage taken (or possibly also to excessive fatigue) directly provides the results of such damage.

It is a fact of weight training that you can increase the amount of weight you can lift in one of two ways: increasing muscle mass or increasing the strength of existing muscle mass. The difference lies in the amount of weight and number of repetitions used in training. For cosmetic reasons, many women opt for increased strength without increasing muscle mass. My system simulates this by letting a character increase LBLD or STR or both in a limb through training.

If you wanted to simplify the system, you could assume everybody had the same fat percentage and thus deal with STR as a fraction of total body weight liftable. Increasing weight would mean increasing BLD, and this would be assumed to mean adding more muscle and fat in the same proportion. Starvation would then decrease BLD which would decrease the amount of weight liftable.

Of course, the weights derived above are the maximum liftable and could not be held long. This would be reflected in a fatigue system which assigned high fatigue values to maximum lifts. In a realistic fatigue system, each location would have its own fatigue level, with the body having a general fatigue level. This would correspond to either tiring a specific location (the way you feel after swinging a sword 100 times with the same arm) and tiring the whole body and feeling winded (the way you feel after a battle, what with parrying, hitting, running, dodging, etc.). Each hit location would thus have its own HP, STR and endurance which could be raised with training. In addition, the body could have a general set of HP, average STR, and overall END (the person's Wnd). These would also be increasable by training. Note that Endurance training is separate from and different than Strength training.

This leads us to the consideration of Constitution, Endurance, Recovery, Wnd, Hit Points, Disease Resistance, and other related attributes. These are not very measurable in physical terms, but must be defined instead in terms of the system. Some systems derive all the rest from Constitution; others separate them and allow each to vary independently or semi-independently. I favor the latter. I have long liked the CHAMPIONS system of Body Points, Stun Points, and Endurance Points, which are separate from but influence by the CON. I would use STR in place of BP. A blow would do both BP and Stun Pts. Armor would have body and stun defense values that would vary depending on the type of armor vs the type of weapon.

One system would define CON as the chance of resisting effects of poison, disease, and other traumas; the roll would be  $5\% \times \text{CON}$ . Each location would have a STR and END value. Body damage would be recorded, for the purposes of later healing and to determine bleeding and other effects. Body damage would directly lower STR in that location. Actions using a hit location would accumulate Fatigue Pts. Stun Pts taken in damage would add to this Fatigue Pt total. When the fatigue total exceeded the location's END, the extra points would also lower STR. At the end of each round, each limb would increase Fatigue Pts by its Recovery Factor (REC). The REC would be a function of CON. There would be a total body END, and all Fatigue and Stun would add together and be compared against the total END. If END was exceeded, the body would become fatigued, with each extra point subtracting 1% from physical skills and 1 meter from movement. If the excessive fatigue reached CON (i.e. Fatigue + Stun reached END + CON), the character would faint from exhaustion. Each point of body damage could also subtract 5% from skills using the damaged location.

HP could be derived both from CON and from LWT, as the more muscle, the better the damage is resisted. One could use full WT, as even fat offers some protection against damage. The head would have low STR but the skull could act as internal armor. Similarly the ribs would act as internal armor to the chest/back. Unless a blow were of special nature, its damage would be restricted to muscle tissue; special blows would penetrate to tendons, bones and organs. A broken bone would cause the STR to drain away in that location. (You can still stand on a broken leg immediately after it's broken; but it rapidly loses its strength with time and the onset of pain.) Damage could cause pain, which the character would try to overcome by a pain

resistance roll. Damage could also have a chance of causing shock or paralysis of a limb. If such a system was implemented on a computer-maintained game, considerable anatomical accuracy could be incorporated. The computer would simply tell the player a blow's result, handling all the computations itself.

Intelligence is easy to deal with. There already exists a standard measure of intelligence, namely the IQ tests. Simply define INT = IQ/10, which gives an average INT score of 10 and a range of 3-25. Modern research seems to indicate that, while men and women have the same average INT, men have more geniuses and morons, giving men a wider INT range. This can be simulated by using different dice rolls to generate INT for male and female characters. For males, use  $D4(D6) + 1$  (roll D4 for how many D6 to roll; then add 1 to the total of D6). This gives 2-26 range, averaging 9.75. For women, roll  $D3(D6) + 3$ , which averages 10 and has a 4-21 range.

DIGRESSION: the dice rolls given above are a very handy way to generate a peaked probability curve which extends further on the high side than on the low. Normal dice rolls, like 3D6, have mean equal to the average of high and low rolls.  $D3(D6)$  has a 1-18 range but an average of 7 instead of 9.5. This can be extended to things like  $D3(D3)(D6)$ , i.e. rolling D3, then that many D3 and totalling them, then that many D6 and totalling them. This has a 1-54 range, with an average of 14.

Calculating the average of such a roll is simple. Average  $(A \times B) = (\text{Average } A) \times (\text{Average } B)$ . The average of D3 is 2, and the average of D6 is 3.5; so the average of  $D3(D3)(D6)$  is  $2.2.3.5 = 14$ . The minimum is a roll of 1 on each die for a total of 1, while the maximum is 3 on all D3s and 6 on all D6s, giving a first roll of 3 on D3, a second roll of 9 on 3D3, and a third roll of 54 on 9D6. In general for  $nDa(Db)$  the range is from n to  $(n) \times (a) \times (b)$ . The average is  $1/4(n) \times (a+1) \times (b+1)$ . For  $nDa(Db)(Bc)$ , the range is n to  $(n) \times (a) \times (b) \times (c)$ . The average is  $(1/8) \times (n) \times (a+1) \times (b+1) \times (c+1)$ . This is because the average of 1Da is  $1/2(a+1)$ .

Given the number of dice most players accumulate and the fact that FRPGs are supposed to be educational, designers should not be afraid to use slightly more exotic die rolls when necessary; especially if--as in this case--they are trying to write realistic rules for the experienced gamer. These rolls can be used for the characteristics already covered. Consider the SIZE, either in decimeters or in 4" units. The average man's SIZE should be about 17.5; the average woman's about 16. Extreme heights are greater in men than in women, with the men having a 6.63-26.75 range and the women a 6.0-22.75 range. (The shortest woman was Pauline Musters, at 23.2".) For men we can cut off some of the extremes and use  $7+3D6$ , which gives a range of 10-25 (3'4"-8'4") and an average of 17.5. If you want a distribution peaked more around the center, then use  $6+D6+4D3$ . For women we can use  $4+6D3$ , giving an average of 16 and a 10-22 range (3'4"-7'4").

To determine WT, we need BLD. If you want to separate BLD into LBLD and FAT, I recommend the following. (Since I used the 4" scale above, I will use the English unit BLDs here.) For men I recommend  $LBLD = 3+2D3+D4$ , giving 6-13 range and 9.5 average. The FAT roll is  $5+D8(D6)$ , with 20.75 average and 6-53 range.  $BLD = LBLD + (FAT/10)$ , so BLD would be 11.575 average with 6.6-18.3 range. This average BLD with LBLD 9.5 and FAT 20.75 would give a body fat %age of 17.9%, close enough to the normal average 18%. For women,  $LBLD = (10+D4)(D3(D3))/2$ , with 8.25 average and 6.15-11.5 range.  $FAT = 10 + 2D4(D6)$  for 27.5 average and 12-58 range. Thus, for women, BLD would be 11 average with 7.7-17.3 range. The average BLD of 11 with LBLD 8.25 and FAT 27.5 would have a body fat %age of 25%, just as it should. In both men and women, cases of gross obesity are eliminated, as these are unlikely to occur in adventurers. If you want a fat person, just assign a high FAT value. (The heaviest man would have had  $FAT = 700$ .)

Combining the above rolls for SIZE and BLD yields the WT values. In English units, the formula is  $WT = 5 \times BLD \times (SIZE/10)^2$ . For the average SIZE man (SIZE 17.5, 5'10"), average BLD of 11.575 would yield  $WT = 177.2$  lbs. The BLD range of 6.6-18.3

would give a 101-280 lb range. The muscular giant would have SIZE 25 (8'4"), LBLD 13, FAT 6, BLD 13.6 and thus WT=425 lbs, with body fat of 4.4%. Actually by training he could raise his LBLD above the normal range. (Arnold Schwarzenegger had a BLD of 14.6 in these units, and thus probably had a LBLD of 14 and FAT of 6, for 4.1% body fat.) I would set a limit of 16 on what could be attainable in LBLD in men. (That would have raised Arnold from 250 lbs to 284 lbs, and Arnold was considered the best developed man in the world.) At BLD 16.6, the giant would weigh 519 lbs. If he had the maximum STR of 24, he could deadlift 1880 lbs besides his body. This would suffice for most fantasy stories. (We are ignoring some physiological problems of weight that would actually reduce his strength due to the square/cube law, but in a fantasy world that deviation is allowable, as it actually better reflects the accomplishments in fantasy.)

For STR rolls for men, I would recommend 2D3(D4), with 2-24 range and an average of 10, which would be reasonable for a fantasy community in which life was more primitive and the men had to rely more on physical labor. For a more civilized community, use D3(D6) with 1-18 range and 7 average. STR above 18 would have to be gotten by training.

The above are arm STR rolls; for leg STR, I would use D5(D4) +4, with 5-24 range and 11.5 average. For the more civilized community, use D3(D4) +4, with 5-16 range and average 9.

For Women Arm STR, use D3(D6) with 1-18 range and average 7. For civilized women, use D3(D3) for 1-9 range, average 4. For leg STR, use the same rolls as men. (Upon further thought, I realized it takes STR 5 in each leg to stand up, but not much more to walk, as you keep your legs fairly straight when walking and are not really moving the body weight up and down very much. Running does take more STR.)

If you opt for the simpler system of considering STR as the fraction of total body weight liftable and assume all characters have about the same amount of body fat (moderately true in a subsistence economy), then--using the English units--you have  $WT = 5 \times BLD \times (SIZE/10)^2$  and  $LIFT = WT \times (STR/10)$  for legs and  $LIFT = WT \times (STR/20)$  for arms. STR and SIZE rolls would be as before. For BLD for men use 4+3D4 for 11.5 average and 7-16 range. For BLD for women, use 5+3D3, for 11 average and 8-14 range. Training would raise BLD, and starvation or dieting would reduce it.

Dexterity is not so easy to evaluate. One method is to consider breaking it up into Quickness (QUIC), Agility (AGIL), and Manual Dexterity (DEX). The first measures reaction time and alertness; this can be heightened by fear or drugs and lowered by fatigue or alcohol or surprise. For a 1-20 score, set Quickness to equal  $2/(Reaction\ Time)$ . Most people's reaction times are between 2 and 0.1 seconds, giving a 1-20 range. Initiative would go to the character with the highest Quickness. Agility would be a measure of total bodily coordination for things like jumping, running, dodging, tumbling, etc. It could be used to determine bonuses for such skill and as a general Agility roll of  $5\% \times AGIL$  to handle difficult maneuvers like leaping onto a slippery rock and leaping off again without slipping. DEX would be simply a measure of manual dexterity: i.e. fine coordination of eye and hand. It would be used to determine bonuses for skills using such coordination and in a  $DEX \times 5\%$  roll for general cases, like picking up a greased pot without dropping it. These admittedly are mostly defined in terms of game mechanics. As such, the normal 3D6 rolls would work here, although a wider range can be had by using 4D6-3 with 11 average and 1-21 range. There is also 2D3(D4) with 10 average and 2-24 range. Fatigue should definitely lower AGIL and DEX.

There are a number of personality or mental characteristics that can be added to help determine how a character should react or what he is capable of thinking. D&D had Wisdom. It is true that high IQ does not necessarily make a person wise, and a person can be wise without having amassed great experience, so there is something to be said for having a Wisdom characteristic. It is not physically measurable and must be defined in game terms or as used in a Wisdom roll of  $WIS \times 5\%$ , used by the Referee.

or Player to see if the character makes the right choice. Bravery/Cowardice can be useful, as well as Piety, Good/Evil, Greed, Friendliness, Trust, Charisma, Obedience, Individual Initiative, etc. These could all have 1-20 ranges, with an initial roll of 3D6, for those who want to randomly create a personality—or the player could assign stats. Rolls of these x5% could be used when appropriate to determine actions. (You do have to be careful you don't go from Roleplaying to Rolliplaying, although some players do seem to prefer the latter.)

Since a good character sheet can have spaces for all sorts of characteristics and skills and still keep it all organized and easy to use, there should be no fear of having enough different qualities to reflect reality adequately. One group that should definitely be there is the senses. Vision, hearing, smell, taste, and tactile senses are all separately variable and should each have its own score. Vision already has a score, like 20:20 or 200:20. This could be used, or the numbers could be divided by 10, or you could divide 200 by the vision score to get Vision in the game. Thus 20:20 would become 10, while 10:20 would become 20 and 200:20 would become 1. Sensory rolls could be made to see if or how well something was detected and possibly identified. A sixth sense could be added for games with psionics and mental magics: the Psi sense. It could be used to detect hostile emotions and thus function as a danger sense. These senses could be used to determine bonuses for skills that use them.

The last characteristic has to do with the magic system used. It can be called Power, Talent, Mana, etc. RQ uses Power both as a store of magical energy to use and as the measure of the magical force behind spells cast, and as a measure of how the character is in tune with the magic-based universe. I prefer a system in which casting magic uses up Endurance like any other activity. The energy used in casting spells is taken from the magical ether or the Force or the local mana flow. Given the energy necessary to accomplish most magic effects, if it were taken from the mage's body, he would die. Therefore magic has to be a channelling of outside forces like gravity and magnetic fields or a tapping of a magical plane. This should be tiring, and the Endurance could come out of the head, just as wielding an axe tires the arm.

A Talent score could determine the amount of power that could be tapped or the efficiency with which it could be manipulated or the chance of success. Since Magic is artificially created in the rules anyway, there is no need to worry about conforming to reality, merely to be consistent and to maintain game balance. A designer may want to research several theories of magic developed in the past centuries to make the game's magic consistent with historical theories of magic. RQ III will have several different magic systems, and I think this is a good idea, to allow for variety in magic in a game.

Now we come to individual skills. Each skill should have a set of bonuses based on all characteristics and senses. If possible, skills should be grouped, but this may require a number of categories to cover all of them. I like the percentile skill system as used in RQ and other games.

I would take each skill and set levels of skill use needed to automatically achieve success in certain activities under normal conditions. Take climbing. An easy tree to climb, with large branches every two feet and no small branches to interfere, should be no problem to climb for anyone with any climbing experience. If Climb Skill is over 20%, no roll need be made. A difficult tree may require over 50% for automatic success. If the skill is under 50%, a successful skill roll must be made. If conditions are not normal, like climbing a tree in the rain or in the dark or under pressure (a tiger is climbing after you), everyone would have to roll.

I also like the Difficulty Die concept. Roll your percentage and also a D20. The difficulty factor must be equalled or exceeded by the D20 roll in addition to the

skill roll being made. (I believe Ray Turney and Harry Henderson thought this up.) [What about John T. Sapienza, Jr.?--LG] This allows the referee to decrease the chance of success by a common factor rather than a subtraction. Subtracting 10% from a 90% skill is quite different from subtracting 10% from a 25% skill. With a Difficulty Die, you can reduce the chance of success by 5% multiples. Thus by setting the difficulty level at 11, the referee halves the skill level.

All Skills should be able to exceed 100%, meaning they would normally always succeed (unless, say, 00 was rolled), but in times of stress the extra %s would help offset difficulty factors. Thus a person with Climb 150% who tried to outclimb the tiger in a rainstorm would be faced with a difficulty factor of 13. He would thus have 60% chance of success, whereas a person with 50% skill would only have 20%.

With regard to combat, I prefer the RQ system of attack skill vs parry skill. RQ III will have Dodge as an alternative to Parry. To handle the problem of two masters never being able to hit one another, I would use my previous suggested system of having better rolls overcome worse ones. A normal hit would be deflected by a normal parry. A special hit (1/5 normal chance to hit) would get past a normal parry and become a normal hit. A critical hit (1/20 normal chance) would get past a normal parry and become a special hit and allow a disarm attempt to knock away the parry item. A special parry would block a special hit and convert a critical hit to a normal hit.

A Critical parry would block all attacks and get a disarm attempt to knock away the attacker's weapon. When a parry blocks an attack, there is a chance the parrying weapon takes damage from the attacking weapon. I do not agree with the RQ system that this makes damage automatic. Two rapiers fighting in classic fencing style parry by sliding deflection and do not damage each other. Weapons in RQ break far too often and too quickly.

I would have the attacker roll the attack damage and compare this to the parry item's breaking value. If attack damage exceeds the breaking point, the item breaks. If not, then its breaking level is reduced one point. If the parry is one step better than the attack (Special vs normal hit, or Critical vs normal or special hit), then the parry item takes no damage; instead the defender rolls the damage of his parry item to see if he breaks the attacker's weapon, as above. One could even say that when a normal hit is critically parried, not only is the attack deflected but a riposte lands a normal hit on the attacker. Or the parry damage roll could be doubled.

An attacker with greater than 100% total attack (counting all adds) would have the extra % over 100% subtracted from his opponent's dodge or parry. Similarly the parry % over 100% would be subtracted from the opponent's attacking %. These would happen simultaneously. Thus a 125% attack vs a 130% parry would result in a 95% attack vs a 105% parry. In calculating damage to weapons, remember that hafts can damage as well as edges. A quarterstaff is all haft, and yet it can snap a parrying rapier. If you parry with a battle axe, you may parry with the blade instead of the axe, thereby possibly doing more damage to the attacking weapon. Similarly, if you attack with an axe and are parried, and if the parry was against the haft, then the damage done against the parry weapon will be different if the parry were against the edge. Damages can be set for one-handed and two-handed hafts, possibly different for thrust as opposed to chop modes.

Let us now consider movement. This should be a series of skills increasable by training, with speed separately increasable. Thus there would be the running skill, used to run over broken ground or on slippery terrain or to run long distances--and the running speed. Both would be separately trainable. If you adopted a 10 second melee round, then the fastest running speed would be about 100m/round for humans. This would be reduced by fatigue and weight carried, as well as terrain (roughness and slope). You would have Swimming skill (swim down rapids, dive and hold your breath,

etc.), and Swimming speed. The top swimming speed would be about 20m/round. (These are based on current world records.) Sprint speeds (held for only 1-2 rounds) differ from long distance speeds. Top marathon speed is about 54m/round or about a 5 minute mile. Top mile speeds run around 75m/round (just under 4 minute miles). Women tend to be a little slower: sprint speed max is about 95m/round; mile speed about 62. Horses run the mile in around 90 seconds (175/round). In 1967 a horse and rider ran 100 miles in 11 hours, 4 minutes--a speed of 40m/round. Wally Hayward in 1954 ran 159.3 miles in 24 hours--an average speed of 29.5m/round. (The fastest quarter-mile by a horse is 20.8 seconds--193m/round.) A man loses to a horse in the short and long run, but can win in the marathon length. (Actually he would overtake a horse in the long run if it were not being ridden, because the horse wouldn't keep running.)

For long distance marching, John Lee crossed the US (3207 miles) in 53 days, 12 1/4 hours--60 miles/day. Peter Selzer walked 30 miles in just under 4 hours in 1971. John Sinclair walked 230.8 miles in 68.5 hours nonstop--80.9 miles/day.

The high jump record is 7'6 1/4", while the standing high jump record is 5'9 1/4". The long jump record is 29'2" or five times the man's height. The high jump record for horses is 9'6"; the long jump is 40'. Jumping would have a distance and also a skill. Climbing would be a skill and have a speed. The record for rope climbing is 20' in 2.8 seconds (hands only)--21.8m/round. The record for tree climbing is 90' in 36 seconds--7.6m/round. The record for deep diving unaided is 250' down. (Sponge divers regularly dive to 120'.) The record for javelin throw is 94m; hammer throw is 76m; shot put is 22m. Throwing rules should take this into account. In archery, the longest shots were made by Hendy Drake in 1676: 2,028 yards with a footbow, 856 yards with a handbow, and 1359 yards with a crossbow. Flying creatures should conform to the fact that the fastest pigeon was clocked at 60 mph. The cheetah can run at the same speed, while the puma can leap 4.5m straight up and 12m out. A charging rhinoceros can run at 28 mph, 125m/round. (The cheetah and pigeon move at 268m/round.)

The taller a person, the longer his stride and the faster he can move for the same number of steps. I would start a character out with a combat movement equal to his SIZE in meters/round. This would average 18m/round. If he wants to sprint all out in a straight line over good terrain, he can double this, averaging 36/round or a 7.5 minute mile. By training, he can increase this speed. Swimming speed is about one-fifth running speed, so it could start at SIZE/5m/round.

There should be no limit on training such as requiring adventures before you can train further. An upper limit on skill level beyond which only practical experience can help should only apply in certain cases. Combat is not one of those cases. The limit in training in combat should be the teacher's skill percentage. I would establish a skill called Teaching. A teacher can teach up to the product of his Teaching skill and the skill he is teaching. Thus a Master Swordsman with 140% in sword who only knew the rudiments of teaching (Teaching 20%) could only teach up to 28%, while a slightly worse master at 120% Sword who was also a Master Teacher (Teaching 100%) could teach up to 120%. A truly great teacher with teaching above 100% could actually train a person to be better than he himself was. Of course, the campaign referee could keep close control of such prized teachers. (The limit with which a person could teach Teaching would be the square of his Teaching skill, and in this case the referee might wish to put an upper limit on the level to which you can be taught how to teach. Beyond that, you learn by teaching.)

A character being trained in a skill should do so for a number of hours equal to his current skill level for each raise in skill. Thus a man who was 70% in Axe would have to train 70 hours in axe to advance. The rate of advancement is a function of how fast the game designer wants the characters to advance--and of the characters themselves. Certain people learn faster than others, and certain teachers teach better than others. RQ III will use the above time factor, and the gain will

will be  $(D6-2)\%$ . It is possible that a poor student with a poor teacher could actually lose ground by learning incorrect techniques or information that will have to be unlearned later.

I like BUSHIDO's method of assigning a learning rate to characters based on their INT and the teacher's skill and the location. You learn faster in a one-on-one relation with the teacher. You learn faster with a better teacher. Here is a possible method. Calculate the maximum teachable level for the teacher (skill x teaching skill). Compare this to the student's current skill level. For each 20% difference, add 1 to the learning rate. For each 25% in Teaching, the Teacher has +1 to the learning rate. For each 4 INT pts, the student has +1. If there are less than 20 other students, +1; if less than 10 others, +2; if 2-4 others, +3; and if it is a one-on-one situation, +4. If training is in a regular school, +1. Now subtract D4 and divide by 4. This gives some variation and a range of -1% to 4%, the same as RQ's  $(D6-2)\%$ , with a little more realism. You could also just use the Bushido method. Teachers get a chance to learn by experience in Teaching if a student succeeds in learning at least a 1% increase.

As for increasing characteristics, everything but INT and SIZE should be at least partially trainable. Some, like BLD, will have a narrow range of change. Campaign managers may want to limit how far you can increase a characteristic: either an absolute limit (e.g. STR 24) or a limit of  $1.5 \times$  initial score. Such limits should be consistent with actual experience in such training, if such data exists. The time needed to gain a point could be 5 hours training per present point total. Thus raising STR 16 to STR 17 would take  $(5 \times 16)$  80 hours training. There should be a limit on STR or BLD training of two hours per session and no more than two sessions a day. Two hours is fairly common for training sessions and is a good standard to use if you want to standardize training somewhat.

A good game should keep economics reasonable and believable. An adventurer should have several opportunities to make a living between adventures. The costs of living should be clearly stated for the various levels of society. The costs of gear and training should be clearly stated and consistent with the income of the craftsmen who make them and the teachers who do the training. The monetary rewards of adventures should not normally exceed a few months good living per party member unless a truly grand treasure is desired or training sessions longer than a few months at a time are desired in the campaign. Magic items should be rare and low-powered, so they mean something when found. Truly grand magic items should be quite rare and well defended. Easily available, strong magic items rapidly subsume all other factors beneath the issue of who has the better magic items. (I've seen some D&D fighters at conventions whose magic items put the powers of my best wizard to shame.) On the other hand, magic should not be so rare that it is hardly ever seen. One or two magic items per adventure is a good rate, for a prolonged campaign, as over time the characters will each get several if they live.

There should be rules detailing the effects of aging, poison, disease, injury, healing, malnutrition, torture, fatigue and other factors. There should be clear rules on how and when a character dies--and how he can be healed or brought back from the dead. Characters should not die at the drop of a hat, but once dead it should be a major undertaking to bring them back. In RQ, the instant a character reaches 0 HP he dies, even though in the next STRIKE Rank the Chialana Arroy priestess heals all damage on the dead body. On the other hand, she can then raise him fairly safely. A Shaman and a Chialana Arroy priestess make a great team; the shaman sics his fetch on the dead man's spirit, which reduces its Power to a low value through Spirit Combat; then the Chialana Arroy Priestess uses Resurrection with only a 5% failure chance. A person can be shot through the heart and his life can be saved if he is close to a hospital and if there is a donor heart handy. Think what today's doctors could do if the ambulance drivers knew Healing 6!

There should be a range in damage in which the character is mortally wounded and dying but has a finite time before dying during which he could be healed. Say that when HP reach 0 he is dying and loses 1 HP per round. When HP reach -CON, he dies. This could take as long as 20 rounds (3 minutes, 20 seconds), about right for actual deaths. By making some sort of CON roll, the dying warrior could even keep on fighting while mortally wounded, in keeping with the fine traditions of fantasy and the actual historical accounts. Once a character is dead, however, it should take an involved miracle or magical rite to bring him back from the dead, or else nobody will ever really die in a campaign.

A good game will include a number of goals for characters to strive for and valid motives for striving for them. The rules should consistently interact to allow and encourage reasonable actions. RQ has the flaw that to improve in several weapons a character would be best off using one until he succeeds, then dropping it and taking out another. This is totally unrealistic--and can be cured by giving a bonus to the experience gain chance of +1%/success with the weapon. D&D had the reasonable fantasy goal of fighting Evil and gaining money, power and experience, but its rules combined to force characters to become insane, bloodthirsty murderers, because you could gain experience only by killing creatures and stealing vast sums of treasure. Forcing Clerics to gain experience by slaughtering other sentient beings seems the height of absurdity. The excessive EP necessary for advancement required large amounts of gold to obtain, which made gold practically useless since there was nothing to buy with it after you got your EP from it. (Living expenses were measured in silvers and coppers.) Getting EP for stumbling on treasure was silly in itself.

The whole idea of constantly going out adventuring to slay monsters to gain treasure is unrealistic and does not reflect most fantasy literature except possibly for Conan, who was after all a thief. More realistic motives would be to obtain fame and respect, to fight against evil and for one's deity and culture, to see the world, to improve oneself (sounds like an Armed Forces recruitment drive, doesn't it?) or to make money. The system should reward brilliant coups like getting into a fortress, freeing a captive and recovering the stolen treasure, then sneaking out without ever being seen, unpursued and unfought. Now that would be a truly glorious adventure that would be talked about the countryside for years. The game system should reward such activities.

Finally, a FRPG's whole purpose is to allow players to roleplay a fantasy adventure so they achieve maximum enjoyment. This usually occurs when the system aids the players in performing great deeds and is still consistent with reality and the laws of physics and politics. The rules should never interfere with the roleplaying or force characters into unrealistic or physically impossible actions. There is no reason a character shouldn't try to leap across a 15' crevasse, grab a rope and swing across a lava stream to the shore where he hauls out his sword and slays the orcs attacking his friend. He can certainly try. Unless he is lucky or skilled or the rules are unrealistic, he will probably fail, but at least the rules should cover the situation. The worst problems occur when a player states his PC will try something clearly possible albeit improbable, and the rules either do not allow it or do not cover it. Rules should also not be so complex and time-consuming that the action is so slow that the enjoyment of the game is lost. These goals are ideals and trade-offs have to be made. I hope that with the increased use of calculators and computers, rules can be made more realistic and still be playable.

These then are my suggestions for the next generation of games. Basing the rules as much as possible on reality allows the referee to make rulings based on reality when questions come up. When a possibility is not covered in the rules, some research into available data in a library can often solve the problem, since priority is given to realism. Deviations from reality should be clearly identified and their ramifications carefully explored. I hope these suggestions are of use and inspire thought.

雲山山麓

Tunshan Shanlu, diba. By Edward P  
Wilson, 3700 Massachusetts Av. NW  
ap3528, Washington DC 20016.  
202-298-8252

Hi, it's me again, back after a long absence. I've been far too busy to do an issue up until now. All sorts of interesting things have happened since my arrival here in Our Nation's Capitol. Most important was that I had to abandon my plans for a master's degree for now. The "Chinese" program at Georgetown turned out to be a linguistic study of the language, all taught in English! Well that wasn't what I wanted at all. Unfortunately tuition had already been paid for the semester so I stayed to keep in practice while I decided on a career. I chose the Navy.

I will only be at the above address until February, when I go to the Navy's Officer Candidate School to become a Cryptology officer.

Enough of that chit-chat, on with the 'zine. Since I've been out of it so long I won't bother with all the comments on back issues but get right into the useful stuff:

#### Merging Classed and Skills-based Character Advancement.

An RPG with character classes can be converted into a crude skills-based system by simply making all characters multi-classed. Using AD&D, for instance, all characters would be FTR/MU/CL/T/A/Rs. The experience for each class would be kept separately. When a character killed something, he would get EP as a FTR. If he picked a lock he would be awarded EP towards his thief level. So if a particular character usually fought, like a FTR and did a bit of magic now and then he might be a level 3/2/0/0/0/0 character. Thus a character's skills/abilities would be related to how much time had been spent at particular activities. This method eliminates messy skills rolls or artificial earning of skill points.

#### Some Thoughts on Illusions.

Just recently I began to replace the spells and spellcasting system in C&S (which I've used happily for some six years now) with those from YRS. However both systems approach illusions differently.

C&S treats illusions as hallucinations created by the casting mage's manipulation of the victim's mind. YRS treats them as holographs.

In both cases, in my new rules, the mage casting the illusion must first remember the spell and then cast it successfully. How successful the casting is will depend on two things: how long the mage has spent practicing that spell and how well he knows/has studied the thing he is going to create an illusion of. He couldn't create something he has never seen before.

Once the spell has been successfully cast, then the victim(s) gets to attempt a save. How the victim saves depends on whether he is saving against a C&S-type mental effect or a YRS-type holographic effect.

Against the former, WIL might be used to resist the control/manipulation of his mind. INT&WIS+2 could be used to represent the difficulty of fooling a more intelligent subject; a brighter person will be more likely to spot some irregularity in the illusion and deduce that it is not real. In short, a subject with a strong mind will be tough to fool. A C&S-type spell also requires that the victim be in spell-casting range.

Holographic illusions' success comes almost entirely from the skill of the caster. The C&S-type illusions try to make the subject see something that isn't there, but this type creates a picture which is there. If it is a good simulation of the desired subject matter, it will be believed. This type does not touch the viewers and so they will not be able to detect a spell being used. A holographic illusion need not be

cast with the victims in spell-range. The caster needs only be close enough to create the illusion where the "audience" can notice it.

The manner in which the two types of illusions would "attack" victims and cause damage would be different. With the mentally created type, the suggestion of damage and pain would have to be strong enough for psychosomatic damage to occur to the victim. The other type would have to be created with a degree of tangibility sufficient to allow it to cause damage directly.

In all cases when figuring how the illusion will affect a victim one must keep in mind that the holographic type acts on the body and senses through normal channels but that the other sort bypasses the nervous/sensory channels and stimulates the brain directly.

#### Why Do Mages Make Magic Items?

Magic items (at least in S&S) take large amounts of time and a fair outlay of money to put together. For a low-level magic-user the construction of a magic item is a major undertaking and even upper-level ones must severely curtail their activities while at work on a device. So why are they so eager to work on them when they could be out doing some profitable adventuring?

Devices are useful to a mage for two main reasons: because they allow the mage to cast spells without using his own energies and because the spells in a device can be cast immediately, with minimal casting time needed.

Energy-saving devices are handy when the mage will need to cast one or two very powerful (and therefore very tiring) spells at a time when he will need all his energies for other spell-dasts. A mage who is off to kill an evil genie will need his power to deal with the guards and traps of the genie's stronghold but will also need lots of power to kill the genie when he gets to him. In this case he might make a wand with a super genie-killing spell in it for the final confrontation.

Conversely, he might need to do many, many casts of a couple low-level spells, but might want to keep his own energy in reserve for emergencies. In a dungeon, for instance, a ring with Detect Monsters or Detect Traps would be used scores of times but the mage will need his power to deal with the various different sorts of traps and monsters encountered.

Speedy spell casting is often of the utmost importance, particularly in combat. Defensive spells are often useless to a mage because they must already be up when the danger strikes. Hence amulets, rings of defense etc. are invaluable as they activate automatically, even if he is asleep, stunned or surprised. Offensive devices allow the mage to counter-attack immediately and make many attacks in quick succession.

#### A Vital Piece of Equipment Found to be Missing!

I own three Sci-fi RPGs, SO, Traveller, and The Mechanoid Invasion. But none of these has a key device which appears in many works of science fiction. I refer of course to the dreaded Probe or Psychic Probe. This electronic device is used to probe a subject's mind and extract information. Unfortunately brain damage occurs, the deeper and more complete a probe the more damage. This damage generally ranges from a headache to total destruction resulting in the victim being reduced to a mental vegetable.

The subject may be placed under the influence of drugs or hypnosis to make extraction of data easier and less damaging. Though these same agents may be used on the person ahead of time to increase the difficulty of such extraction but with greater psychic damage resulting if the probe technician is able to break down the subject's mental barriers. Magic and psionics may also be used in place of and in additi-

on to psionics and hypnosis as above.

The technician's skill is a key factor in how successfully a probe is used. A poorly trained operator will have trouble tracing the desired information and will always cause more damage than necessary. In fact, clumsy use of the probe may damage or wipe clean the area of the brain with the information before that data can be extracted.

In societies where individuals' rights are strongly respected, the probe will be used sparingly and lightly. By reading only the surface thoughts of an individual, a Probe can act as a crude lie detector.

In a police state Probes are used regularly and to whatever degree deemed expedient. In fact it is often possible to get a person to talk or cooperate merely by threatening to do a "total" probe on him!

Probe machines are rather high-tech devices and tend to be rather large as well as very expensive. The ownership of such devices is quite restricted, usually to authorized government agencies only. The high price is another factor in keeping ownership limited.

The exact cost, size, effectiveness and other parameters of Probes will depend on the rules one is using.

#### Military Intelligence Officers.

Recently, when I abandoned my plans for a graduate degree, I looked into the various civilian and military intelligence agencies as possible careers for a language major like myself. While looking into just what intelligence agencies do I was also starting a SFRPG campaign. I noticed a great discrepancy between the intelligence services as portrayed in Traveller and SO and as they are in real life.

In Traveller, an officer who goes to intelligence school is offered a set of skills more typical of a gangster than a real military intelligence officer. The skills possible are: Forgery, Bribery, Streetwise, and Interrogation (plus Gun Combat for Naval officers).

In real life, intelligence organizations exist to locate sources of information, extract data therefrom, decode and/or translate it if necessary and then evaluate it and analyse it for presentation to various officials and decision-makers.

Sources of information range from another country's daily newspapers to top secret documents and transmissions. These sources can be exploited by one of three general methods. One is to openly buy or monitor public sources of information: books, T.V., radio etc. Another is to secretly (and generally illegally) obtain data by direct physical means: contacting disaffected elements, bribery, blackmail, theft etc. This is the more exciting (and dangerous) "007"-type stuff. The third method is to covertly obtain data by electronic means: bugging, wiretaps (these two usually carried out along with the second method), spy-satellites, listening posts (for radio, microwave, radar and other transmissions) and reconnaissance aircraft and submarines.

Modern-day military intelligence uses only the third method (though in a guerilla war the others might be used) along with interrogation of POWs in wartime.

Once data has been accumulated it is decoded by cryptologists and translated by linguists then sifted through so that extraneous items can be discarded and important ones removed and classified.

The sorted and classified information then goes to the analysts, who are highly trained and educated specialists who evaluate and analyse this data and prepare reports and papers. The reports go to the appropriate decision-makers, who may be an infantry captain in the field or the Prime Minister.

Of course all intelligence organizations have counter-intelligence arms but in the military this is usually confined to physical security

Yunshan, Shanlu, diba Page Four.

of bases and equipment and to codes for communications security.

So in Traveller, the skills taught at Intelligence School should be: Admin, Computer, Commo, Fleet Tactics, Interrogation and Liaison. But one can better do Intelligence by breaking it into six branches, each with it's own set of skills. (I'll use SO skills as Traveller has too few skills and most are too general).

1. Listening Posts&Reconnaissance.
- 2; Development of Intelligence-gathering Equipment.
3. Translation and Cryptography.
4. Analysis.
5. Liaison with other departments, agencies, officials, etc.
6. Security/Counter-intelligence.

Skills for #1: Alien Languages, Elec.Systems, Comm.Systems, Detection Systems, ECM Systems, Sub-light Comm., Computers(all), Comp.Programming(all). Since various sorts of vehicles are used too, all vehicle skills might be added.

Skills for #2: General Physics, Mathematics, Chemistry, Metallurgy, Linguistics, Mech.Engineering, Elec.Engineering, Computer Engineering, Power Engineer., Space Engineer., General Mech. Ecpt., Elec.Systems, Comm.Systems, Detection Systems, ECM, Sub-light Comm., all computers, all comp.programming, and Portable Power Sys.

Skills for #3: all computers, all programming, Linguistics, Alien Lang. & Cultures, Mathematics.

Skills for #4: Geography, Planetology, Astronomy, Admin., Gen.Social Sciences, History, Comparative Cultures, Forged Documents.

Skills for #5: Admin., Alien Languages, Comparative cultures.

Skills for #6: Psychology, Interrogation, Admin., Forged Documents, Crime Analysis, Personal ID, Bomb Disposal, Alien Languages, Streetwise Detection Systems, and various weapons.

Hmm, I wasn't going to do any comments but as I have so much space left on the ole stencil, I may as well do a few on A&E #99:

JOSEPH W.TELLER, re Baron Munchausen. As I understood it, the Baron was a folk-tale character of sorts. As a child I had a book of tales about him. All were set in a fairy-tale Europe of vaguely late 1700s/early 1800s. The tales were all wildly imaginative tall tales, rather like those about Paul Bunyan. For instance, in one story the Baron stands next to a cannon about to be fired at a besieged city. As it goes off he hops on to the cannon ball for a ride into the city; he uses the same method to get back afterwards.

PAUL WATERS; re captains of naval ships: according to a booklet/brochure I have from the U.S.Navy, one might command a small ship as a Commander after 17 years in service. Command of a really large ship comes only after about 22 years, by which time one will probably have become a Captain. (Having the rank of Captain and being captain of a ship are different things). A Navy Captain is the equivalent of an Army Colonel.

Okay, that's all for now. It will probably be quite a while before I can contribute again, but I'll still be reading your stuff here in The APA of APAs: Alarums&Excursions!

THE OTHER TRUE WAY the whichever

Produced by Quentin Long (845 LaVerne Way, Los Altos, California, 94022)

Hoo-boy what an issue....I went in my hopefully-for-#100 zine in November, and Lee told me it'd appear two months after that issue. Onward:

Onward: here be a filk to the tune of the Addams' Family theme song....

A scientist is working  
Hard work he's never shirking  
But near his lab is lurking  
The PROXMIRE GOLDEN FLEECE!

Which says, to cause great sadness,  
His work is utter badness,  
Which drives him near to madness!  
That PROXMIRE GOLDEN FLEECE

(ba-da-la-dum) \*snap\* *Snide*  
(ba-da-la-dum) \*snap\* *Vile*  
(ba-da-la-dum) (ba-da-la-dum)  
(ba-da-la-dum) \*snap\* *PROXMIRE!*

The dairy-land, Wisconsin  
Is where the man's ensconced in;  
Of other states, none wants him  
Or PROXMIRE'S GOLDEN FLEECE!

That may not do any good, but it sure felt nice....

VOID WHERE PROHIBITED BY NATURAL LAW

Stukey's heretical opinion (of #100) was rather interesting. Herewith a different way of handling this idea. Why not just ignore point totals?

To clarify: at present, Champions characters are required to be point-balanced, so that the points spent on powers and such equal the points gained from crocks plus the base amount (generally 100). Why not drop the point-balance requirement?

As you have all doubtless noticed, that requirement doesn't stop SuperMunchkinism; instead, it forces SMs to be ingenious enough to find ways of getting around it. Which, unfortunately, they generally do. So why bother about balance? One still ought to keep track of point totals, as a rough indicator of the character's level of grossity, but does it really matter if the character has only 20 points of crocks and 220 total points? No, says I, particularly if the character is a genuine *character* and not just another Damage-Producing-Device Man.

It's been rather slow around here, as far as RPGing goes. Outside of a new Traveller campaign, I've not had much gaming of any sort. Sigh. May as well skip on to comments, after this message....

HOW NOT TO DO IT: or, the pot callsthe kettle black

Regarding a certain message which soiled A&E 100 (which is about what certain people seem to think of OTW), I have a few comments which might be of interest to those who do not share Jacobson's opinions.

1) If one seriously accuses another of stupidity, unclarity in writing, or any other failing, it is immensely helpful to offer evidence to support the accusation. Jacobson conspicuously failed to do this.

2) Presumably Jacobson felt that some significant fraction of the readership of A&E would be interested to know he no longer stoops to read anything in any way connected with me; that is, after all, one of the main reasons one writes for an APA in the first place, is it not? However, his notice, reduced to its essentials, may be summed up thusly: "Quentin Long is stupid and ignorant. He has grossly offended me, so I refuse to read anything of his any more. Anyone who likes his stuff is also stupid."

I may be biased on this matter, but I feel a notice of such little content ought not to have taken up three paragraphs. Its space might have been better employed for some other filler. And, to sum up, its inclusion in A&E was pointless. John T. Sapienza (if memory serves) could write such a boycott notice which was well worth the page it took up; unfortunately, Jacobson is not of Sapienza's calibre.

3) Jacobson is entitled to have any opinion of me (or any other person) he likes but he seems foolish when he serves up a blanket condemnation of all those who do not think as he does. This is the sort of thinking to which the term "one true way" may be accurately applied, and it can well be avoided with both pleasure and profit.

#### COMMENTS ON A&Es 99/100

COMPASSIONATE ONES: "The deep feeling of sharing the suffering of another in the inclination to give aid or support, or to show mercy." So does the America Heritage dictionary define compassion; the New Century says, "A sympathetic emotion excited by the misfortune of another; pitying sorrow or mercy." If we can agree on that, I continue--defining "subsistence-level existence" as "that state in which a significant fraction (maybe 80% or more) of one's resources, physical, economic or otherwise, are devoted solely to keeping oneself alive." All right?

Now, keeping in mind the difficulty of doing two things at once, I concluded that people in subsistence-level mode have an excessively small opportunity to do anything not directly involved with staying alive and thus seemed to have little or no opportunity to do compassionate things. It is, of course, a separate matter to feel compassion; grinding poverty of the worst sort doesn't stop one's emotions, eh?

Take a look at Bob Cratchit, for instance. He was on the high end of subsistence-level living, says I, yet for all his sympathy and compassion he was, as a practical matter, unable to do much to express said emotions. Now look at Ebenezer Scrooge, the pre-Christmas model that is. Scrooge Mk. I was a tin-plated SOB from start to finish. Therefore, all his vast riches, placing him as far as possible from subsistence-level for a Dickens character, would not turn him into a philanthropist. He certainly had enough opportunities to express any compassionate impulses he might have; as it happens, he had none. Very rich people might be compassionate but are not required to be; but subsistence-level folks would seem, as a practical matter, unable to be compassionate. This was what I was attempting to point out, so unless anyone has any earth-shaking points to make on this matter, may we let it drop? Thankee.

#### COMMENTS ON 99

M GOLDBERG: Hmm, I think I too would not use Champions on complete neophytes. If you really want to have superhero games for neos, I suggest you try Villains & Vigilantes; V&V is a good deal simpler than Ch and a far better simulation of comic books. //Re ct to BURT: But isn't it possible that once high tech becomes reasonably common the State might disintegrate without harm to all the companies and what not which make all the tech stuff? //Re Superworld: Not worth the \$20, particularly if you already bought Worlds of Wonder.

J TELLER: Anxiously awaiting Protectors of Power: Part II.

M WILLNER: Re No-Prize: I know. Also, if memory serves, our own Richard Schwall once (20-odd years back) came up with an elegant method to explain how Spidey's web-shooters were activated, and his idea was completely ignored in Marvel Universe (sigh). And Schwall's idea was infinitely better.....

M DAWSON: What ho, another person appreciative of Mrs. Byrne's Dictionary! Where else could one possibly learn that a "borborygm" is "the noise made by gas in the bowels; a fart" or that "zuchetto" is a Catholic yarmulke ("white for the Pope, red for cardinals, purple for bishops, black for the rest")!

I ENGLE: About them Three Laws and One Commandment o'yourn: some things are impossible. Or don't you believe in physical laws?

D. JAMES: re RAEBNC: When one has comments to make, one need not say Read And Enjoyed But No Comment; ergo the thing "one says instead of RAEBNC when one has got comments to make" is neither more nor less than the comment one is making.//Re guns and Americans: Well, I certainly don't own one nor do I see any reason for me to do so; but I can sympathize with those who believe they need a gun. Will some New Yorker explain to Daniel about the South Bronx?

RM PEHR: "Biodaughter"? Aghast, intolerable abomination! What a hideous neologism! For your sake, I hope no other such surface in Tales of Magic....

R SAUNDERS: Re planetary Silly Questions: yes, all planets rotate. All of them in this solar system, at least. And (quick look through the Techno's Bible) not all of them rotate the same way. Venus, whose day (time between two successive sunrises) is about half as long as its year, spins "retrograde" (If Earth is defined as spinning clockwise, then Venus is counterclockwise); and Uranus, well...Uranus' axis is tilted 98° or so (compared to Terra's 23.5°), meaning it's hard to say. Day lengths range from Mercury (about 200 Terran days) to Jupiter (a touch under 10 hours).

AP WALKER: You're daft if you think Apple's price policies are comparable to a con game or fraudulent stock sale or some such. The reason confidence games are illegal has little to do with the difference between the price paid and the value received; nay, con games are illegal because the victims receive no value for money spent! Are you seriously suggesting that the Apple II+ (to take the machine I'm typing on as a random example) has a value of nil, or don't you care about getting the details right? Regardless of how much (or how little) Apple overcharges for its products, it still happens to have some copyrights, and violation of those copyrights is, in a word, theft. For a thief to turn around and sell his ill-gotten gains for a price lower than that charged by the rightful owner may be poetic, but wouldn't it be even more poetic if the would-be thief had instead decided to take the time and effort to learn enough about the stolen item to be able to make it cheaper and better than the originator? Of course not; it's far easier to steal....

#### COMMENTS ON 100

LEE: Re "Sci-Fi": My standard explanation goes like this: Star Trek was SF; Lost in Space was Sci-Fi. See how we agree.

RS STUKEY: About them additions: you've got my letter (and maybe even my zine), so I'll confine these comments to the Heretic. Did it ever occur to you that the entity called "Power Points" might be viewed as a measure of the resources (money, etc.) available to the character? Maybe Bruce Wayne's fortune is, from a different viewpoint, identical to a vast supply of power points....Not that power points are replacing money, any more than electricity replaces magnetism, but they might be two different ways of describing the same thing. Or on the other hand, they might not.

I don't think that the Marksman/Darkshot thing is a real problem; it's just part of the genre. The heretical solution to this "problem" is not very good, says I; one ought not do something which simultaneously lowers the cost of a power and increases its usefulness. TANSTAAFL, ya bow!

JT SAPTEENZA: Re ct to GILHAM: If I turn a dragon into a Planarian Flatworm and gish it to death, I fail to see how the spell's expiration would miraculously return the wyrm to life. Sure it'd turn back into a dragon,... anyone encountering the corpse would wonder what could be powerful enough to smash a dragon as a child would smash an ant.

DF NALLE: Re comic books: If you've read any pulp heroes (Doc Savage, the Shadow, et al), you've got a semi-accurate notion of what comics are about.

N LARTER: Good work in "Beyond the Valley of Etc" but what about us Agnostics?

## DARK AGES PAGES #7

as retyped by Lee Gold; by Martin Wixted, 105 West St., Danbury, CT 06810;  
(203) 792-2654

### ERIN

fantasy rolegaming in legendary Ireland

The first version of ERIN is now available for playtest to get all the gross errors out of the game (hopefully). The cost is \$4.75 (about what you'd pay for a book these days--softcover). The \$4.75 is my cost in printing it. Any suggestions on how to get its 80 pages xeroxed (or whatever) cheaper? *[Out here we have places that xerox for 3¢/page uncollated.--LG]*

I could say that the rule system is a "great leap ahead in terms of the state of the art; it's awesome, really awesome,"...but it's simply not true. I am a pupil of K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple, Stupid) and the system reflects that, I hope. The game's strength is its ability to transcend this reality and bring characters to life. I have attempted to do that with rules for personality (Personality Profile) and rating the numbers wherever I can (e.g. STR 15... Outstanding) and the same with Skill levels (Dance 20, Competent). This enables someone to say, "I have outstanding strength and can dance competently."

#### WHAT YOU GET:

**THE LAND:** a guidebook through the land of Erin, including such things as living conditions, hairstyles, common flora and fauna, calendars, holidays, beliefs of the Christians and Druids at the time, the social hierarchy, and more.

**CREATING A CHARACTER:** "complete" rules for generating a character: including skills, rules for developing personalities, suggestions for motivations, character dreams and hopes. A Wild Talents Table, giving your character a little quirk or two to round him/her out. A table for generating a true Irish last name, including about 100 names with both the Anglicized version and the original Gaelic (or Norman) versions. For example: Mac Kilpatrick [Mac Giolla Phádraig]; Mac Conway [Mac Conmhaigh or Mac Conmáide or O Conbhuidhe or O'Conamhacháin] (four versions of the Gaelic).

#### WHAT YOU DON'T GET:

**INTRODUCTORY ROLE PLAYING:** allows beginning players an easy and fun way to learn what roleplaying games are and how they work. This booklet (12 pages with a cover illustration by Darlene of TSR fame) the average A&E reader doesn't need. If you want it, send \$1.25 more, and I'll send it out to be xeroxed.

**GAMEMASTER GUIDE TO ERIN:** it's not finished. I need to do the Creatures.

#### WHAT IS THE GAME ABOUT

Participants begin the game as real people: farmers, craftsmen, nobles, slaves, wanderers, monks, nuns, druids and bards. They vie for land, property, and position. (ERIN has no towns and no currency!)

ERIN is set in a time of legend. When mighty kings are aided by magical druids. When the best laid plans of conquest are destroyed in the twinkling of an eye. When Christian monks endeavor to wrest control of the populace from the druidic religious leaders.

ERIN is set in a time of turmoil and war. A land of majestic landscapes and mysterious bogs. A land of religious strife. A land of beautiful music and poetry. A land of little people and magic.

The land of ERIN.

Visit the Time of Legends. You'll never want to come home.

```

*****
*
*      O U R O B O R U S   # 1 7
*      brought to you by WYRLD WYRM
*      "We Gyrdle ye Glohe"
*      Copyright 1983 by Robert Plamondon
*      2220 California Street, #9
*      Mountain View, California 94040
*
*****

```

November 5, 1983

## A NEW MAGIC SYSTEM

### Introduction.

The main difficulty with magic systems is that they have no foundation. The nature of magic, the source of magic, and even the mechanics of spell-casting are undefined.

Sure, you can have an "elemental" system, and split your spell list into four parts; but that's a rationalization, not a rationale.

And magic systems are so mechanical. You whip out your cookbook, follow the instructions, and bang! sauteed Orcs. Want more spells? Trade recipes with another mage, or take an advanced cooking class from your neighborhood Cult.

It works, but it strips the sense of wonder right out of the game. Everything is spelled out, cookbook fashion, in the rulebook. No sense of wonder there.

Worse still, the mages themselves are limited to cookbook actions; there's no intuitive "feel" for magic, no direct sensing of it, and no direct manipulation of it. Magic is deterministic, with no subjective element. That doesn't help promote a sense of wonder, either.

To put back the sense of wonder we need a magic system where the foundation is created before the spell book, where the spell book doesn't have all the answers, and where the magicians can sense magic forces directly -- and even control them directly, if they're good enough.

The Foundation.

I wanted a magic system that would dovetail nicely with my European campaign, with its traditional magic. I also wanted one where magical forces could be felt on an emotional level, so people would feel uneasy in haunted houses, or in the presence of something greater than themselves in church. This makes it easier to involve the characters as characters, since part of every description is the emotional impact of the surroundings.

My magic system is based on a small number of assumptions, listed below:

1. The source of magic is a force (or wind, or field) which flows through every point in the universe. This wind is called the aether.
2. By the principle "like attracts like," the use of magic in an area attracts more aether than ever. If magic is practiced constantly in an area, the amount of aether flow can become quite large. The aether that can be obtained from a given source is referred to as the source's mana.
3. The aether in a region is initially without form, but the principle "like attracts like" causes it to be aligned towards its previous uses. An area where fire-based magic is practiced will have mana that is marvelous for fire-based spells, and all but useless for anything else.
4. The aether flow decreases when magic use stops, over a period of centuries.
5. Humans (and others) can sense strong concentrations of aether. Those trained in magic can see its characteristics clearly; mundanes can only react emotionally to it. Thus a mundane in an Elvish land would sense that he was in an eldritch place; but a magician would also see particulars of form and texture of the aether. The emotions evoked by a place are called that place's aura.
6. Mana can fuel magic through ritual or by direct manipulation. Strong emotions also affect it.
7. All matter has some mana. Some things have more than others.

Confused? You Won't Be

In a system such as the one described above, the aether becomes like its users. For example, a church may start out on a magically neutral piece of ground, but the rituals and the emotion will cause the mana level to build over time, and the mana will reflect the uses that attracted it. For church-related stuff, it'll be great; but a mage would have trouble getting his spells to work there, and an enemy wouldn't be able to cast spells at all.

The amount of use a mage can get out of an area's mana depends on the similarity between the mana and the spell. This similarity is usually broken down into two parts: similarity of form, and similarity of intent. In most cases, form and intent are considered to be of equal importance (1).

For example, a mage in an astrologer's stronghold would find informational spells fairly easy to cast, even when they differed in form from the ritual of astrology. But the lack of similarity between astrology and voodoo would mean that a witch doctor would be hindered by the local aura.

Since perception of mana tends to be on an emotional level, people find being in enemy territory to be either terrifying or depressing. Even being in alien territory can trigger fear -- many humans are terrified by Elves and Elvish territory.

Auras affect magical creatures on a physical level. This is why undead creatures are destroyed by holy water, and vampires are pained by the sight of the Cross.

Individuals have their own auras, which are very strong in some magical creatures. Dragons and vampires can bewitch the unwary by sheer force of personality, Orcs panic at the appearance of an Elven Lord (no matter how much they outnumber him), and humans will flee a Lich or Nazgul.

Local flavoring of mana has an odd side effect. A strongly magical area encourages conformity in spell-casting; the old ways work best, and radical departures hardly work at all. This means that the path of least resistance is to keep to the established ways.

Mages who stay in one place tend to become very set in their ways. They spend all their time refining their skills in their best areas, letting their general skills go. In time, they seem like

---

1. See Randall Garrett's Too Many Magicians for a system with a similar rationale.

charicatures of themselves.

This is true to some extent of all spell-users, though the solitary mage is the most common example. Religions also suffer from this same inertia, and cleave to the old ways long after they are out of date.

The areas affected by magic use vary according to the nature and the concentration of the use. A mage who stays inside his tower will build up a tremendous amount of mana in the tower itself, and for a hundred yards or so beyond it, but that's about it. Less localized spell-casting would spread out the effect.

### Results

One of the first thing you notice when you start working with this system is that it manages to explain most "traditional" magic. It provides a fairly neat explanation for demons and vampires shunning holy ground and the Cross, solitary mages with strange quirks, and just about all the magic in The Lord of the Rings.

This means that this magic system can be applied to campaigns based on Northern European or Tolkien myth, while maintaining the original flavor of the magic.

Perhaps more important is the idea that everything has an aura that affects people on an emotional level. This allows the Game Master to use a great deal of imagery when describing things, which gives the players useful information without spelling everything out. In addition, it allows the magic system to go from a cookbook system to a knowledge- and intuition-based system, where the ability to "see" auras and manipulate them is the basis of a magician's power. This is the way magic works in Robert Asprin's Another Fine Myth. An example of this type of magic follows:

GM:

On the table you see a naked longsword. Its blade is covered with black runes. You can feel its power, faintly, even at this distance.

PLAYER (whose character is a magician):

I'll move closer and study it.

GM:

The runes are completely unknown to you. The sword is fairly typical, with a few unusual stylistic touches. No gems, gold, or silver on it. As you study it, you can see that it is bound with Earth magic and blood magic, and its aura reminds you somehow of Orcs, but you don't know why. You find its aura very repulsive.



THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION  
PUBLISHED WEEKLY  
CHICAGO, ILL., U.S.A.  
Subscription price, Five Dollars Per Annum in Advance.  
Single Copies, Fifteen Cents.  
Entered as Second-Class Matter, May 2, 1912, under Post Office  
No. 383, at Chicago, Ill., under special agreement for delivery  
by mail. Postage paid at Chicago, Ill., and at additional mailing  
offices. Accepted for mailing at special rate of postage provided  
for in Act of October 3, 1917, authorized on July 16, 1918.  
Copyright, 1914, by American Medical Association  
Published by the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn  
Street, Chicago, Ill.

CONTENTS  
Original Articles  
Reports  
Editorial  
Correspondence  
Book Reviews  
Announcements  
Index